

THE DUTY
OF
CHRISTIANS
TO SUPPORT
THE ORDINANCES OF
THE GOSPEL.

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THE
DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS
IN CONNEXION WITH
THE SUPPORT OF THE ORDINANCES
OF THE GOSPEL.

BY
THE REV. PETER RICHARDSON, B.A.,
DAILLY.

“The Lord is their inheritance.”—DEUT. xviii. 2.

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EXPLANATORY NOTE.

A GROWING conviction, strengthened by careful observation and minute inquiry, that the obligations resting upon members of the various sections of the Church, in reference to upholding the ordinances of religion, are in general very improperly discharged, induced the promoters of the

GLASGOW PRIZE ESSAYS

to call attention to the subject, by inviting members of all Evangelical denominations throughout the three kingdoms to compete for two premiums of £150 and £75, to be awarded for the best papers on

THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO THE SUPPORT OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL.

The Adjudicators, who cordially accepted the appointment, were the Rev. Dr Robert Buchanan, of the Free Church of Scotland; Rev. Dr John Eadie, of the United Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. Dr William Symington, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The first of these gentlemen, after devoting some weeks to the work of examination, was necessitated to relinquish all mental labour, and remove to another climate for his health. The Rev. D. Patrick Fairbairn, Principal of the Free College, Glasgow, was solicited, and at once acquiesced in assuming his place.

The number of Essays lodged for competition was *eighty-one*, of which fifty-nine were from various parts of Scotland, seventeen from England, and five from Ireland. Many of these papers contained highly valuable matter, tending to elucidate and enforce the subject, and bringing out a great variety of practical suggestions for the faithful discharge of this important Christian duty. It is hoped that a few more of them may yet be given to the public.

The Adjudicators, after careful and patient investigation, were unanimous in awarding the two prizes respectively to the Rev. Dr J. A. Wylie, Edin-

burgh, and the Rev. Joseph Parker, Banbury; while they recommended a third one for publication, being the production of the Rev. Peter Richardson, Dailly. The following is the digest of their report :—

“ A considerable portion of the Essays are of inferior merit, but not a few are distinguished by solid thought, careful examination, and a full exhibition of scriptural principles on the subject of inquiry. Having respect to the leading object in view on the part of the promoters of the competition, the Adjudicators deemed it necessary to keep prominently before them, when estimating the comparative merits of the Essays, their relative adaptation to popular use ; on which account they were obliged to set aside several which displayed vigorous thinking, and contained much valuable matter, but which failed to present the subject in a manner fitted to interest and impress the popular mind. The Essay that appeared to all the Adjudicators to be the best for the purpose aimed at, turned out to be the production of the Rev. Dr Wylie, Edinburgh. It proved more difficult to decide upon the Essay that should be entitled to the second prize ; but after conferring with each other, and comparing together the two or three Essays that seemed to come nearest the point, a unanimous finding was arrived at in favour of number sixty-two, the production, as shewn by the accompanying letter, of the Rev. Joseph Parker, Banbury. Essay number seven approached, in some respects, so near to this, and appeared so well adapted for reaching a considerable class of minds, that the Adjudicators are disposed to recommend also the publication of this Essay.

Signed

{ PATRICK FAIRBAIRN.
JOHN EADIE.
WILLIAM SYMINGTON.”

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THE
DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIANS.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.

THE GOSPEL BASED ON A CONGERIES OF FACTS.

THE gospel is God's gracious proclamation of pardon, peace, and blessedness to the world. This *proclamation* addresses itself to the condemned, estranged, and miserable. It carries in its bosom a tacit affirmation of the *Fall*. But while there is *one* awful fact which it *assumes*, there are other facts on *which it rests*. They are most glorious, beyond all thought of creature. In heaven they will be for wonder and for praise for ever. The offended God, in unutterable love, has Himself brought salvation. The crisis was *ever* in the eye of Eternal Wisdom. And so, also, was the remedy. It was no expedient, occurring at the moment of need, formed in a surprise, unknown in its efficacy, and uncertain in its operation. In the very hour on which the heads of the new race fell from their loyalty, the gracious One, in mercy, disclosed His purpose of redemption. Through long ages light shone increasingly upon it. At last, on the plains of Bethlehem, angels sung in the shepherds' ear the glad news of "Glory to God, and peace on earth." They pointed to a babe newly born in the inn of the neighbouring village, as destined to win both blessings.

That mysterious infant was the Son of God, incarnate in the nature, and subject to the law, of His own creature. This law, as the expression of the Father's will, He clasped fervently to His bosom, yielding to it an obedience on all sides perfect, and then bearing to exhaustion the penal agonies it imposed. This matchless homage to the sacredness of Divine authority, and the excellence of the Divine will, is fraught with saving efficacy for the depraved who could not yield it; and this great offering is fragrant before God on behalf of the condemned, whose sacrifice of suffering in their own person would have filled with woe the whole immortality of their being. "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." Glorious news for a fallen and miserable world! And this is the gospel.

Now, in looking on the gospel, as thus based on a series of facts, several reflections naturally rise to the mind, embodying important truths.

1. These facts *must be known* in order to be operative. We limit not the resources of infinite Wisdom, or pretend to determine whether it may not be possible for sovereign grace to work efficaciously in high independence of means, and aside from the established order. But to us the command is unambiguous and imperative: "Preach the gospel to every creature," "*Disciple* all nations." It was gospel facts that early evangelists proclaimed concerning "Christ and him crucified." Nor is there any doubt or dimness about the channel through which the heavenly life is appointed to flow into the soul: "He that believeth shall be saved." This is the revealed way of salvation. With this alone we have to do. By this alone we are to regulate our conduct. The facts must be known: "How shall they believe except they *hear*."

2. These facts operate by no magical influence, but by appealing to the understanding, feelings, and conscience of man. They are not things to be conjured with, working sud-

den wonders by dark signs and mystic names. The operation is a *process*, not an *act*. The voice of these glorious gospel events is calm and sober, though solemn, urgent, and authoritative. They claim far more than a passing glance, or a hasty and unconsidered admission. They must be deliberately and impartially weighed. The understanding must open to receive them, the heart melt to embrace them. They must effect a lodgment deeply in the *faith*: "He that believeth shall be saved." Blessed Lord! His affluence of power is such that virtue comes out of Him even at the faint touch of a trembling faith. But it responds to nothing else. He, the great glorious Centre of all gospel facts, must be known, loved, trusted. The renewing Spirit alone can produce this result. But His instruments are the facts of the gospel.

3. As a corollary from these two,—There must be some adequate means of bringing these facts in contact with the mind which is to be enlightened, and the heart which is to be renewed. They occurred on a certain spot of the earth's surface. Glorious as they are in themselves, and pregnant with everlasting issues, they were crowded into a few of this world's years. Divine in their majesty and power, they are yet of earthly tissue, transacted on the stage of ordinary life, and, therefore, to be communicated from man to man by the usual channels. The elements might possibly have been charged with the weighty task of proclaiming them. They might have been made to gleam in the lightning flash, and win their way by miracle into the human consciousness. Strange voices might have mysteriously whispered them at noon-day, or "when deep sleep falleth on man." To angels the glorious task might have been committed. They would have been honoured by it. And we can fancy them speeding with it through the dwellings of men, endowed with the new capacity of framing our gross air into articulate sounds, and breathing them rapturously forth into the ear of astonished men. But a miraculous

ministry would not suit our present state of being. It would interfere with man's free activities, and, therefore, with his probation for eternity. Angels, it is true, in the dark days of old, when heavenly light was feeble, and the Saviour *yet to come*, stood forth from the invisible, and in corporeal form uttered the will of God in the words of man. Once, too, on the plains of Bethlehem they raised their exulting voices. But when the incarnate Lord is introduced, and heavenly light shines about Him, and the simple record of His marvellous doings and vicarious endurance, vitalised by the Almighty Spirit, has become the birth-power of the new and immortal life, what need is there for any extraordinary ministry? The sacred sphere of angelic agency remains untouched; but on the stage of outward things they would stand in the Saviour's way, obscure the glory of the Spirit's work, and disturb the fixed look of faith at the message which they bore.

The gospel facts, then, must be brought within reach of the human race, by human agency, and in the ordinary way.

4. The means to be adopted must be of a *permanent character*. First, *as to the race*. They must accompany the human family in its progress through successive generations, for the purpose of effecting in each the grand primary object of the gospel, viz., the salvation and renewal of souls. On the breast of each successive wave of the advancing race the heavenly radiance must be thrown. Second, *as to the individual*. The great gospel facts must be constantly held up in the eye even of those on whom the saving and regenerating process has been wrought. In the case of ancient Israel, the basement facts of their national history were fruitful of mighty impulses to holiness, through their whole subsequent career. The mature life of the people was nourished by the grateful remembrance of those stupendous interpositions of power by which a good God had guarded their feeble infancy. And strong measures were adopted for keeping them vividly alive in their

memory. Even so must the great events of our faith, more glorious and more efficacious by far than all the wonders of Egypt, be made to stand forth clearly and constantly in the view of those "who have believed to the saving of the soul." Their nature is only partially reclaimed from its sinfulness. The mainspring is new, but there is dust yet upon the wheels. And as they ever need to "grow in grace," so these divinely glorious facts are endowed with the unfailing power of nourishing their growth. The Christian race must be *begun* and *continued to the goal*, "looking unto Jesus." Gospel facts are never old and never feeble. Needed *at first* to light the pilgrim through the wicket-gate, they are needed *always* to refresh his weary heart and hasten his lagging footsteps.

So far this series of steps has brought us. Another series will bring us to the very heart of our great subject.

CHAPTER II.

GOSPEL ORDINANCES.

ALL the means available for the permanent presentation of the central facts of the gospel may not be open to our knowledge. But there are certain kinds of instrumentality that commend themselves pre-eminently as suitable and adequate. Let us briefly survey them.

1. One agency of a powerful kind would be *the committal of these fundamental facts to the custody of a written document.* This has been done. The gracious God—blessed for ever!—*has become an author*, for the benefit of His fallen creatures. He has dictated a book. In it these facts have found a permanent record. And so rich is this book of God, in all that the ruined creature needs, that it is “able to make wise unto salvation,” and then to be the “light” and “lamp,” the “joy” and “song” of a believer’s pilgrimage. In its hallowed pages the Saviour is enshrined and glorified. It tells, in simple and artless words, the wondrous story of His birth and death, His words of calm and majestic grace, and His works of holy power. It adds to these the inspired counsels of followers whom he commissioned and equipped as guides of the Church’s faith and life, so that by this heavenly volume “the man of God may be made perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

2. Another powerful instrumentality for setting forth gospel truths would be *public observances.* In these the social life of the body of believers would find both *expression* and *expansion*. Besides confirming their faith and deepening their

interest in the glorious facts of the gospel—binding round themselves, as they do, the *social* affections—such public and permanent institutions would bear, on their very front, the character of witnesses for the truth. This provision also has been made. The public meetings, and especially the sacramental observances, of the Christian Church are pillars on which gospel facts are sculptured. And though these monuments are now venerable for age, they are not “dimmed,” or their “natural force abated.” The blessed truths which they have registered through many a dark and godless age, stand forth still as clear in tint and definite in outline as when the disciples ate their first communion feast, or the gracious farewell words, “Go into all the world, teaching and *baptizing*,” fell from the lips of their departing Lord.

3. Another means of perpetuating a knowledge of the leading events of the gospel would be *the setting apart of a fixed portion of time, either expressly as a memorial or to give leisure for their study*. This has been done. The Sabbath serves both purposes. That old venerable institute—memorial at first of God’s complacent rest when His “good” works were finished—is continued in the new dispensation. The precise day is changed, but the proportion of time remains. And the sacred rest is hallowed now to a still higher and more glorious purpose. It is a standing witness to the gladdening fact that “the Lord is risen.” Its silent calm proclaims redemption finished, and points to the great Redeemer as risen in triumph from the last blow of an exhausted curse, and standing forth to the light of life again, the accepted Surety of His people. Happy news for a condemned world! Precious day, whose every hour has a Divine mission to proclaim it! But the Sabbath is more than a memorial. It brings to the busy world time and opportunity for pondering deliberately over the glorious event which it commemorates, and over all the other facts which cluster round it. The holy day brings healing

balm to labour, and gives rest to the world's maddened brain and throbbing pulse. And the leisure-space it leaves is cleared for heavenly aims. "It is made," by a most gracious God, "for man," the immortal subject of God—fallen now and condemned. And it provides refreshing and grateful repose for meditating on all the circumstances of that wondrous mediation whose successful issue it proclaims so sweetly.

But these three kinds of instrumentality do not exhaust the means which might be adopted for bearing efficaciously on the human mind. The *Book* is divine all over, breathing a heavenly majesty, and instinct with a saving, gladdening, and transforming power. But a book speaks not, moves not, does not glow again in sympathy with the emotion which it stirs. The outward observances and the Sabbath institute are most impressive as memorials of important events, and most precious as means of grace; but they are only occasional in their operation, they need an interpreter, and the former at least, if not both, *assumes* the intelligent comprehension and heartfelt reception of gospel truth, making no direct *provision*, and having only an indirect *influence*, towards the inbringing of "them that are without," and the regular communication of instruction for the solid and symmetrical growth of "the household of faith." Hence the expediency of employing another kind of instrumentality. The gospel is a royal proclamation, and therefore it must have its *heralds*; the Church needs to be fed with truth, and therefore she must have her *pastors*.

4. *The institute of preaching.*—In the old economy the messages of heaven came through the hands of men. Prophets lifted up their voice in the name of God. And still the rule is, "*Son of man*, speak unto this people." In the beneficent work of "publishing salvation," and promoting holiness, the gracious Lord has enlisted the persuasive power of human looks, and speech, and gestures. When His own personal ministry ceased, and heaven received Him with songs into its

bosom, He left behind the precious legacy of "apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers." And though now the apostolic gifts and functions have expired, and all that is supernatural has withdrawn from the outward ministry, all that is needed for instruction and edification, for the supply of renewing and sanctifying truth, remains still in the powerful agency of men of God who have "given themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

The power of a minister is a combination of forces. It may seem a paradox, but it is a truth, that the very *sight* of a minister is a means of grace. Why so? Because he stands forth as a man separated from his fellows, consecrated to a heavenly purpose, having all his distinctive connexions *with eternity*, and dealing with its stupendous issues as his proper business. He is an embodied gospel, peculiarly "a living epistle." And if faithful, how mighty is he as an instrument of God! There is in his pleading the melting power of *love*, and the weight of *authority* as an ambassador of Christ. There is in his ministry the might of a *definite aim*, pursued with a *concentration of effort*. As the counsellor of his people, and the helper of their social and moral advancement, he wins for himself a place in their *grateful regards*, and for his message an earnest and favourable hearing. His instructions have the accuracy and convincing power of *experience*, the weight of *earnestness*, the moving might of *sympathy*. And when a servant of Christ goes forth thus among his people, his heart swelling with the love of the gracious One who bought him with His blood, yearning for the manifestation of the Divine glory, and the unlimited increase of saved souls to sing it, and bask in it everlastingly, while the deep love of his heart wells forth in his moistening eye, and speaks in his tender tones—oh! is there not here the mightiest instrumentality which this world could furnish for moving the human heart? This is the *grand ordinance of the Christian Church*, not only *in itself*, but

because it embraces all the rest. The written record is the preacher's text-book and treasury of truth, and his armoury for its defence. It is the well of life at which his own spirit drinks, and to whose healing streams he leads his thirsty flock. *The Sabbath* is a sacred space kept clear for him, his labour-day and seed-time. The *sacraments* are silent but impressive seals of the reality and transcendent importance of the truths that issue from his lips. The ministerial power is thus the resultant of many forces—all acting in the same direction—while it has also the peculiar advantage of *constant action*, embracing *the most favourable seasons* for bearing efficaciously on the heart. The servant of Christ is ever at hand to press his appeals, to vary his arguments, to reiterate forgotten lessons, and revive fading impressions. He can distil his gentle counsels into the softened heart of *suffering*, and pour rich streams of awakening and consoling truth into the *mourner's* melted heart. With the *young* he deals at the *forming* period of their life, when their curious minds are opening, and their simple and trusting hearts are absorbing influences on every hand. How great and multiform is a minister's power! And how wise in His kingly graciousness that Lord, who left it as a legacy to His Church!

We have thus presented the "glorious gospel" as based on facts, which to be operative must be known; which appeal to the mind and heart of man, and only thus become influential; and which must therefore have an apparatus of outward means for publishing them through the world. These facts, and the means actually employed by the Divine authority for publishing them, have been enumerated more emphatically than might have seemed necessary, but for the weighty reason that the whole dynamic force of the gospel lies in the region occupied by these facts and their instruments. By this process of statement, the fountains of authority binding to the discharge of all Christian duties have been laid bare. And in

the very presentation of the *facts* of the gospel, so boundlessly glorious, important, and interesting, and the *ordinances* of the gospel, so numerous and varied, so beneficently powerful and appropriate, there is a strong and authoritative appeal to all Christian hearts for the efficient maintenance of the means of grace.

We proceed now, more formally, in the endeavour to present the argument for "the duty and privilege of supporting the ordinances of the gospel."

CHAPTER III.

THE DUTY, IN ITS BINDING OBLIGATION—RIGHTS OF THE
REDEEMER.

AT the outset, one or two things fall to be noticed, as marking out the limits of our field of inquiry:—1. It is the duty of *Christians* we have to ascertain and illustrate. 2. Of the two leading functions of the Christian Church, self-preservation and self-extension, it is the former only that is here referred to—the *maintenance*, not the *multiplication* of means—their *continuation in time*, not their *propagation* over the earth. The sphere of this duty is not the foreign, but the home field; nor this wholly, for the outlying masses of our native heathenism are not here included, except in so far as they are within reach of existing instrumentalities. The support of gospel ordinances among ourselves; this is the subject. 3. The support meant is not *attendance on* ordinances, or any *countenance* given to them otherwise; but contributions of worldly substance for their maintenance.

On this field, so defined and narrowed, let us enter, by considering the obligation which binds to the discharge of the duty.

This authority is threefold. Its sources are *God, ourselves, and our children*; the rights of our Divine Redeemer, the interests of our own souls, the welfare of our descendants, immediate and remote.

1. *The rights of the Divine Redeemer*.—He is *King* in Zion. Royal rights are His.

Now, (1.) The maintenance of ordinances is a tribute to

Him. The ordinances are memorials of the most important events that ever occurred in this world or in any other—events in which the incarnate Lord was the great actor, and all whose glory gathers into a halo round His head. It is the glory of a king. The ordinances are the means of displaying it. The *house of prayer*, with its weekly crowds of worshippers, offers Him reverence. The *Lord's Supper* sets forth a conquering love which endured all things, and a kingly power which won its mediatorial crown from death. The *Sabbath*, heaven's jubilee-day, Divine in its conception, its beneficence, and its authority, bears in its holy calm the stamp of royal dignity. Most lordly day! Mark of God's great hand upon His finished work! A golden fillet round creation's brow, bearing the reverent inscription, "Holiness to the Lord;" not only, as in days of old, consecrating to the "Lord of the whole earth" the world's whole sum of plenty and garniture of beauty, but now, with special emphasis, proclaiming the Redeemer risen and glorified, and invested with "all power in heaven and in earth!" It is the witness of His glory, the celebration of His triumph. The *minister* is servant of a king, not only proclaiming the redeeming grace, but wielding the high authority of Christ in the "*kingdom of God*."

Now, these ordinances, by their very nature, can be supported only by contributions of worldly substance, or its representative, money. A house to worship in costs money. The elements of a communion feast cost money. The servants of Christ are creatures of flesh and blood, living, like other men, on this world's food, bought with this world's money. There must be the consecration of a portion of our means for the maintenance of these ordinances. It is the Lord's tribute-money. Dare we grudge it? Can we stint it? Oh, who would grudge this poor peppercorn to the Lord who gives us all!

(2.) The maintenance of ordinances is enjoined by the Lord

Himself. The twelve and the seventy whom He sent forth during His own personal ministry bore with them their Master's sanction to draw support from those to whom they ministered. He might have supplied them from the common purse. If the payment of their simple necessities, or the intromissions of the treasurer, made this impossible, yet He who fed the multitudes by miracle would find no difficulty in filling the scrip of His followers with all that they required. But does He? No. Designedly, deliberately, He takes another plan. He sends them forth *empty-handed*. Their *support* must come from their *employment*. By His high authority He made them *free of their hearers' substance*, up to the point of a comfortable support. "Take nothing for your journey, neither *bread*, neither *money*. Eat such things as they set before you."

Nor did He mean His servants to be viewed as dependants on public *charity*. They were not mendicants. The support they received was not *alms*. All such degrading misconceptions of their position and claims the far-seeing Lord, jealous of His servants' honour, anticipates and condemns. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." How generous and how wise! He knew how easily the claims of His messengers would slip out of the sight of money-getting selfishness, and to what mischievous extent even Christian hearts might lose, almost unwittingly, the sense of their just dues, and throw, patronisingly, to them as *a gift* what they could claim as *a right*. And to adjust once for all the proper place of His servants, and secure them all due honour, He utters in the ear of disciples, and leaves to be engrossed in the inspired record of His life, for use in all time coming, this classic sentence, "The labourer is *worthy of his hire*."

The authority of the glorious Head of the Church is enough to determine this as the fixed law of ministerial support. Nothing could add *weight* to it. The royal will, once

expressed, is decisive. But repetition adds *impressiveness*. Hence the Lord Jesus has re-affirmed this law, and, by doing so, has given it new emphasis. The great apostle, whose "abundant labours" did more than those of any other for shaping and consolidating the Church, was inspired to utter loudly again this same fundamental law. Let us listen, while the King of Zion speaks to us through His enlightened and large-hearted servant.

"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you : *not because we have not power*," &c. (2 Thess. iii. 8, 9). Mark here, first, Paul toils as a workman. No shame this; for labour is hallowed by the carpentry of Him of Nazareth. But mark, secondly, Paul's toil is self-imposed. He is under *no obligation* to labour with his hands. He does it for a special reason. Thessalonian idlers need an "ensample" of hard-working diligence. Paul sinks his right to an independent maintenance, and gives it. How noble in his self-denial! Doubly honourable is that sweat which bedews the brow of laborious and self-sacrificing love. But this exception only throws new light and force upon the rule. He *had rights*, though he sank them for the moment. He was entitled to live entirely on the contributions of the Church. It is the same still. The right on one side, and the obligation on the other, continue. The apostle, then, *affirms* his right in this matter. But what if we can shew that, at the same time, he also *exercised* it? This we can do. We find, by an undesigned coincidence of the most beautiful kind, that at the very moment when the apostle was declining to burden the Thessalonians with any part of his support, he was receiving freely and thankfully the donations of the *Philippian Church* : "Even in Thessalonica ye sent *once and again* to my necessity" (Phil. iv. 16).

Listen, again, to this "wise master-builder." His state-

ment to the Corinthian Church is larger and more emphatic. It occurs in his first letter to that Church (1 Cor. ix. 7–13). In this powerful appeal he uses all manner of arguments. *He reasons from analogy*: “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?” And again, “They which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple; and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar.” In the sphere of ordinary life adequate and suitable remuneration is given. The soldier, the husbandman, the shepherd, lives by his employment. So also did the officers of the sanctuary. They earned their livelihood by their sacred ministry. Why should it not be so with the servants of Christ?

He quotes from Scripture: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn” (1 Cor. ix. 9). A most merciful statute in its immediate application, and fraught with important symbolic meaning, as illustrating God’s way of dealing with *His* faithful servants. This from Moses. But listen again: “Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. ix. 14). A greater than Moses is here. And the law He makes is not provisional, but perpetual; not for one region only, but for all. “The Lord hath ordained”—yes, *ordained*, not as an interim act, or for a special occasion, but as a fundamental law, which carries with it all the majestic authority of Him “whose voice shook the earth,” and binds with an obligation as strong as the enactments of Sinai.

Lastly,—*He appeals to their own sense of what is fair and equitable*: “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” Words both wise and weighty! Mark their outspoken frankness. The great and honoured apostle would feel it no reflection, even on his delicate and manly independence, to draw his support

entirely from the members of the Church. Why so? For the substantial reason that by his services to them he was rendering more than an equivalent. The advantage would lie on *their* side, not *his*. The benefit which he gave was large; the benefit he received was small. There was an overplus to his account. And that overplus was *infinite*. Yes, there is *no proportion* between the "carnal things" and the "spiritual." Who would for one moment weigh a world's wealth, and all the comforts, luxuries, and splendours it can buy, against even the brief glimpses of joy that break from eternity upon the melted heart of a new-born child of God? Who could call his contribution a *sacrifice*, if, by supporting gospel ordinances, it helped to dig at his very door a channel for the river of life to flow in?

We have thus seen how the apostle was inspired to write regarding the maintenance of the servants of Christ, and, as involved in this, of all gospel ordinances, *at two periods of his ministry*, viz., to the Thessalonians, about A.D. 52, and to the Corinthians, about A.D. 56. Let us hear him once more *a few years later*.

1 Tim. v. 17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." Mark here, first, There were certain elders who gave themselves to the work of teaching and its kindred duties. These were the ministers of the Church. Secondly, The *honour* referred to includes, as its bulkiest element, an *honourable maintenance*. Is this doubted? Then read the next verse, "For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." His meaning is clear. And for proof he rests again on the written Word. Again he appeals to the same authorities. That old merciful statute, how fresh it seems in the apostle's eye! Does he not deal with it as if, in its emblematic import, it were a *statute* yet? He does. It involves

a *principle of permanent power*, and of great importance. If it were a mere *illustration*, he would not place it side by side with that other *statute* from the lips of our Divine legislator. About *it* there can be no doubt. Royal authority enacted it. It is the great fundamental law of ministerial support, re-appearing in all its force.

Again, in the case of Timothy himself, we find by example what is the settled order in this matter. In 1 Tim. iv. 15, we find the young evangelist enjoined to “give himself *wholly* to reading, exhortation, and prayer.” How was this possible, unless his support had been drawn from those to whom he ministered? Had he a private fortune to live on? Though he had, would the apostle, with his noble forwardness in discerning merit and awarding praise, have omitted all mention of it, quietly taking for granted that, as a matter of course, his young friend would live upon it? Certainly not. That would be an injustice to Timothy, and to his people a grievous injury. It is plain this young minister lived entirely on the contributions of the Church. And it is equally clear that he *continued* to do so, for the same apostle, in writing to him long afterwards, when his own “good fight” was nearly over, and the “crown of righteousness” in view, tells him to devote to his sacred work his whole time and unhampered energies: “Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.”

We have thus seen that the maintenance of ordinances is a *tribute to the Lord Jesus*, and is enjoined by Him on His people. Let us now inquire, further, *Is this tribute due? this authority valid?* To Christians this needs not to be *proved*, but it greatly needs to be *enforced*. Let us calmly look at it together. As *creatures*, all we have belongs to the great Proprietor in the heavens. “All things come of thee.” These bodies, “fearfully and wonderfully made,” are His. That more wonderful intelligence within, so keen in vision, so varied

in power, endowed with a kingly immortality, is the breath of His "infinite understanding." It is, therefore, His sacred right to have every faculty exercised for Him. These varied blessings with which our lot is crowded—food and raiment, comforts and luxuries, and the money that buys them—all belong to Him. But has He not made gift of them to us? Yes; but not unconditionally. They are ours *for Him*. The gift brings with it an obligation—the property, a burden. The great King claims from us "suit and service." He deserves, too, by His infinite excellences, what His creative power and sovereign authority entitle Him to demand. And when we consider this glorious Lord as *a Redeemer*, and the creature as *reclaimed by almighty grace from sin and ruin*, does not this added relationship immeasurably enhance the weight of authority on the one side, and the force of obligation on the other? Christians, look at it. For you the heavens were moved. Over you the bowels of mercy yearned. Amid the rush of sovereign motives impelling, and daring enormities of sin provoking, to a vengeance that should glorify His omnipotent purity, the offended One stayed His hand from punishing. Nay, with an astonishing grace, which none but Himself can fathom, the Sovereign Lawgiver stooped to human frailty—bore a life of neglect and toil—became the meek sufferer of mortal agonies. Amazing sacrifice! And this is the price of your deliverance. God is honoured now, and His law fulfilled for you. The virulent power of evil within you is mercifully broken. Your heart is quickened and purified by the Spirit. Heaven's holy joys are won for you, and you are preparing for them. Most blessed people, beyond all thought! But, oh! that blood which bought you has dropped on all your duties, enjoyments, and hopes. Your temporal blessings come from the hand of mercy, and under the seal of mediatorial grace. Favours forfeited have come again, all redolent with the fragrance of a Saviour's work. And does not the experience of

this great salvation bring a mighty increase to the power of all previous obligations? Is not the glorious Mediator invested now with authority more weighty and more tender? You are doubly His, for He has bought you back from death. You are given into His hand, and with you all things else. This mighty King, with many crowns, resting now in glory from the toils of a painful and humbling Mediatorship, presses closely on your heart His claims of sovereign authority. And by all that He endured, and all that He bestows, He claims the consecration to Himself of every feeling, every faculty, every portion of worldly substance. Oh! can we grudge, dare we withhold *that little* portion of our substance, needed for the support of ordinances, which He deserves and demands as a tribute to His high authority and glorious grace?

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUTY, IN ITS BINDING OBLIGATION—INTERESTS OF THE SOUL.

THE second branch of this obligation is that which refers to *the interests of our own souls*. On this point one or two *main statements* will serve to mark out the channel for our thoughts.

First—*There is an obligation resting on all Christians to promote the true interests of their souls*. This will be denied or doubted by no one. It is but a higher application of the law of self-preservation. If the preservation of the mortal life be a duty as well as an instinct, much more emphatically is it so to seek the maintenance and growth of the spiritual life. The duty is inseparable from the privilege.

Secondly—*This obligation extends to all the means available for the attainment of the end in view*. This also needs no argument to make it good. An obligation to an end *covers the whole intervening space*—with equal authority binding to the provision and employment of means, where these are necessary and attainable.

Thirdly—*The ordinances of the gospel are fitted with Divine wisdom for securing this object*. Let us look carefully into this statement.

The grand crisis of the soul, in which Almighty grace deals with it, and determines to good the complexion of its endless destiny, is unique in character and importance. Bringing a glorious and happy *reversal*, it can occur only once. But the vital processes through which the spirit passed in emerging from wrath to favour, and from the corruption of the old nature

to the holy affections of the new, are continued still. While the sovereign act of acquittal and acceptance is completed at once, admitting neither repetition nor continuation, the faith on which it proceeded is to be a standing exercise of the soul. The genial penitence and tender love into which it melts the heart are to be occupants of that heart for ever. All these governing exercises of thought and feeling in which that new life breathed at first are to be renewed and repeated every day. There must be growth: "Ye are God's building." There must be diligent cultivation: "Ye are God's husbandry. And inasmuch as this has to be prosecuted on a field not entirely cleared of enemies, the life becomes a warfare. These enemies are both within and without. Self-righteous *pride* would still lift itself up in the sight of God. The crucified *flesh* strives for mastery still. An infirm faith permits the facts of the gospel to fall back from their commanding place in the heart. That heart gravitates to evil. The new spiritual nature has to make way amid and against all previous tendencies, prepossessions, associations, habits of thought and feeling. And the condemned world without, pursuing its own dark and godless way, grasping madly at the hollow forms of happiness which rank and honour, riches and fame, present, is pressing closely round to pollute him with the contagion, and hurry him away in the tumult of its eager rage for trifles. Amid this array of enemies, most of them native to his heart, and at home there, beleaguering the very seat of power, and getting easily within his guard, what wrestling saint would not hail the help of a powerful ally? Christians! that help is near. Our blessed Lord has lodged it in the ordinances of His Church. The Sabbath calm is holy. It reminds you solemnly of a holy Saviour, who, to "redeem you from all iniquity," consented even to die. It gives you leisure to weigh, fairly and deliberately, the nature and results of these leanings to evil, while by its soothing power it so refines and elevates, as to make the sensitive spirit recoil from

sin as a gross and offensive thing. But more than the Sabbath itself is its "meeting of saints," especially when outward elements hold forth affectingly the condescending grace of the gospel. The social prayer and praise, fostering faith and love, heighten the holy breathings of each by the glow of a common fervour. And more than the Sabbath, with its holy calm, and worshipping multitudes, and solemn sacraments—because embracing and employing all—is the preacher's living voice, uttering the words of the living God. Your sense of sin is unhealthily feeble—he strips from the vile thing its disguise and apology, and quickens your dormant conscience to seize and condemn it. You are struggling with some rampant vice—he leads you to the high tower of a Saviour's strength, and gives you good hope through grace of an eventual triumph. You are battling, or perhaps almost ceasing to battle, with "an evil heart of unbelief," that would throw a haze over all the revelations of God, and lead you to distrust the Saviour's grace—he comes with his weekly message, setting solemnly before your mind the grand realities of the gospel, pressing on your heart anew its wondrous display of love, making doubts disappear, and suspicions flee, and the chilled heart melt and bend before the majestic grace of Deity incarnate, and dying for our deliverance. Oh! is not this display of facts, so incomparably glorious, by one who has felt their power, the best conceivable means of recalling the heart from its wanderings, breaking the spell of its worldliness, and giving it a mighty impulse in the prosecution of its heavenward path? Christians! all this is for you. The Lord himself has given it. You are charged with the support of it. Your soul's welfare is bound up with its continuance. By all that high authority which binds you to be like your Lord—by all that is ravishing in His smile, and terrible in His disapproval—by all that is loathsome in sin, and lovely in holiness, and desirable in the perfection of your spiritual nature—you are bound to the maintenance of these precious

ordinances. You need not be reminded how important is the place assigned in Scripture to these ordinances, and especially how vast a range of beneficent operation the Christian minister is represented as occupying. Do you need *instruction*? he “teaches every man in all wisdom:” *encouragement*? he is “the helper of your joy:” *quickening*? “reprove, rebuke, exhort,” are his standing orders: *nourishment*? he is both a “shepherd” and a “nurse.” So that over the whole breadth of your spiritual being, and compass of your spiritual needs, the servant of Christ “is set for” your effectual help. Most precious institute! The Lord himself has owned and blessed it. It has been to innumerable souls the channel of heavenly grace. It has been so to you. It must be so always. Your thirsty soul must drink and drink again at this rill of “living water,” and never cease or slacken till it enter the land where the Sabbath and the Supper last for ever—where outward means and emblems are no more needed, and the little bands of earthly worshippers unite to swell the “general assembly” of “the just made perfect,” and the preacher’s rousing and warning words are merged in the song of eternal triumph. Till then the privilege lasts. Till then the obligation presses. What Christian heart can grudge a liberal gift to the support of ordinances which the Saviour blesses to the furtherance of so glorious an issue? Who can contemplate without horror the *results of their cessation* to his own purity, and progress, and hopes of heaven? By what name, then, shall we call the refusal to render them any support? Is it ingratitude? Is it folly? Is it blindness to the true interests of the soul? It is all three in one.

WELFARE OF POSTERITY.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUTY, IN ITS BINDING OBLIGATION—WELFARE OF POSTERITY.

THE last ground of obligation to the support of gospel ordinances is *the welfare of the coming generation, and, through it, of those that follow*. The argument here must be addressed mainly to parents; for, though others are deeply interested, it is in the case of parents that the duty culminates.

Children are “a heritage” from God. He has given them in charge to the parents. The trust is weighty beyond all conception. It involves a maintenance for the body, and the careful development of the intellectual faculties. Most important of all, it binds to the training of the moral feelings, and to the employment of every instrumentality for renewing the heart, and thus securing their true and lasting happiness. A *soul* is at stake, with high powers and immortal being. Its whole character and endless destiny are coloured and moulded by parental *influence*. The parental *obligation* has in it, therefore, the authority of a providential law, and the weight of everlasting interests. Great need is there, surely, for the diligent use of all means available for helping in its fulfilment. High among these means rank the ordinances of the gospel. It is true that a parent's primary duty is to exert his personal influence with a child in the quiet circle of home. And his advantages for this are manifold. His power is a combination of influences. The filial instinct and the natural conscience are on his side. Gratitude, reverence, affection, unite to make the child's heart a softened soil, on which all warnings and all

lessons light. He is *with* his child constantly, and at the forming period, in the fresh morning of life, when the curious mind is opening, and its absorbents are in fullest vigour. But the wisest parent will be the first to own the desirableness, and to welcome the prospect, of other help. Outward ordinances are most admirably suited to his purpose. For, (1.) *They are memorials of facts*, and facts are more level to the understanding of children than *doctrines*, expressed abstractly as such. It is matter of thankful joy that, under the guise of narrative, the leading doctrines of revelation have been so advantageously conveyed. (2.) *They appeal to the senses*. Now, we know that in children the senses are in liveliest exercise. Most of our mental furniture enters early by the channels which they open up. Children reason little, and comprehend reasonings less. The material of thought pours in through every avenue, but the elaboration is a subsequent process. They live mainly in the region of the sensible. But all the more are their observant eyes awake to everything around them.

In both dispensations of His grace, the Lord has condescendingly consulted the good of children, by setting forth to the eye striking memorials of important events, as the means of stimulating inquiry, and unfolding and enforcing truth. Every year, on a stated day, the Hebrew children saw—strange sight—blood trickling down the door-posts of their dwelling. And when they asked, “What meaneth this?” there was presented to the parents a most favourable opening through which to pour into their earnest and excited minds the wondrous story of selecting grace, and the terrors of a midnight vengeance which left not one Egyptian dwelling without its dead. When these same children saw the first-born of man and beast, with solemn rites, devoted to the God of Israel, their curious minds were again led back to the same impressive facts (Ex. xiii. 14).

For seven days in the year the thousands of Israel left their

stated dwellings, and lived in slim tents of palm and willow (Lev. xxiii. 40). Strange conduct this! But most striking as a picture of the desert life of their fathers; and to the young of all coming generations, a most impressive memorial of the power and grace which led a feeble and rebellious multitude through the perils of the wilderness.

Twelve stones, from the midst of Jordan, were laid together on the site of Israel's first encampment in Canaan, to be for all time coming a sign to all; and to children especially, a stimulus to inquiry, and a visible witness to that triumphant power which dammed up the swollen river to let the ransomed people pass (Josh. iv. 8). The weekly rest for the weary was full of quiet suggestiveness, even to the young heart, presenting as the ground of grateful thought the nation's happy escape from bondage.

The ordinances of the Christian Church are fraught with similar power of impression. The Sabbath-calm tells to all, but to the *young* with special interest, the marvellous story of a Saviour's victory. And, if rightly taught, what sight could be to their susceptible hearts more striking and sublime than this blessed ordinance, like a majestic bow spanning time's whole expanse, with one end resting on the tranquil purity of Eden, and the other melting in the eternal rest? The baptism of a babe is a solemn and impressive spectacle, fitted to lead little children to serious thought, and to anxious inquiries about the origin and meaning of the ordinance. The sight of earnest worshippers gathering to God's house, and, most of all, sitting down to their communion feast, with serious air and thoughts turned inward, and handing to each other bread and wine, as if all strifes were hushed, and love had bound the throng of guests into one band of brotherhood—is it not most stirring and impressive? Well may children cry, "What meaneth this?" And gladly will the Christian parent answer by recounting the wonders of a "love stronger than death."

The presence of a minister, with kindly gravity, and words of earnest affection, is full of power to waken the mind and move the heart of the young. The conscience even of a child is accessible to his remonstrances against sin; and when the servant of Christ, with all his Master's authority, deals forth saving truth from his place in the house of God, amid the stillness, attention, and seriousness of listening worshippers, or whispers soothing words of counsel and encouragement at the sick-bed of a father or a mother, or strives with patient kindness to lead his own young heart heavenwards, who can tell with what deep impressiveness a ministry like this is fraught? *What would a Christian parent not give to preserve an instrumentality so powerful?* What amount of worldly substance would he not be prepared to surrender so as to secure its continuance? These ordinances are the authorised and ordinary channels of saving grace. The Lord himself has promised His efficacious presence and blessing to all who rightly use them. Christian parents! this "promise is to you and to your children." But even apart from the promise, and taking into view only the facts of ordinary experience, is it not a *probable* thing that the prayerful and assiduous employment of gospel means, for the child and with him, will result in the attainment of the proper end of the gospel, viz., the saving of the soul? This is more than enough to bring a weighty obligation, and to warrant decisive action in their employment and support. How would you act in the sphere of ordinary life? Suppose you inferred from the success of others, or were told, on high authority, that in a certain river, within certain prescribed limits, and by the diligent employment of a certain apparatus, you had a favourable chance, amounting almost to a certainty, of *finding a nugget of gold*, would you not set to work at once in right earnest, and would not your diligence, and *the sum you were willing to lay out on the apparatus*, be proportioned to the expected size of the nugget?

Christian parents! the prize you seek is worth more than a *world* of solid gold. The salvation of your child, deliverance from a doom too fearful to contemplate, the purging of a corrupt nature, enrolment among the sons of God, whose heritage is in the heavens for ever,—oh! is not this a blessedness worth praying for, and labouring after, and supporting an apparatus to secure? By what standard will you reckon the proportion between *the cost of ordinances* and this prize of endless purity and joy? There is *no* proportion. And the obligation to support them is weighty beyond all calculation.

One word more on this point. Every instance of withholding or limiting unduly the support of Christian ordinances *tends towards their downfall*. Let it become general, and their cessation is inevitable. Now, what, in such an event, would be the condition of the world—that world in which your children and their offspring are to think and act? Look carefully at this.

These ordinances are not only helps for the Christian, and to many the means of renewal and life, but they are *the conservators of moral healthfulness in the general community*. They throw a mellow light on the whole circle of society—even on those portions of it which never come within the sphere of the peculiar power, purity, and joys of the gospel. They quicken the public conscience. They raise a protest against sin. They hold up to the eye of guilty indulgence a condemning picture of Divine righteousness. They recall the jaded world to thoughts of a higher life. They fan and filter the public sentiment, and preserve a freshness in it. Mighty agents! and beneficent as mighty! They keep down gross vices, in some measure, and stop the impious mouth of braggart infidelity; so keeping clear the soil in which your young ones are to grow. But let these outward ordinances be suspended—let the preacher's dues be withheld, and his voice silenced, and the social feasts of Christians left unprovided for—how terrible would be the eclipse! The godless world itself would shudder

at the darkness, and for a short time gaze perplexedly upon the blank. The Christian Church might “hang her harp upon the willows,” “because none come to the solemn feasts.” Her powerful voice is silenced. The salt has lost its savour. Society goes to corruption. Rank vices, the fungi of a degenerate community, grow boldly up in the shade. Godly character, clearly defined against the darkening mass of evil, stands forth as a better mark for the scoffer; while the defence and encouragement of a *common* faith and worship has fallen from the hands of the Church. *On such a soil, in such an atmosphere, what Christian parent could bear to plant his child?* But this is not all. If you withdraw the ordinances for which you pay, then the ordinance for which you do *not* pay will follow. *You could not preserve the SABBATH from obliteration.* The sacred space would collapse under the pressure of eager worldliness without, when its holy furniture of social worship and sacramental observances was gone. That isle of calm would sink in the seething deep of the world’s breathless trifling; and heathenism would come again with deeper guilt and a heavier curse; and the rebellious earth, robbing God of His best witness, and bereaving itself of the mightiest means of blessing, would be prepared for final vengeance.

We say not, that this dark day of suspended ordinances and crippled energies is coming on the Church. We know it is not. The sovereign Lord in His grace has taken pledge of the future that it shall not. Nor do we say, that such a catastrophe enters into the calculations of those who sin by withholding or stinting their Christian liberality. But we do say, that this appalling result would follow if the sin became general. And the perennial flow of liberality in others, kept up by Divine grace, and insuring the maintenance of Christian ordinances, abates neither the dangerous tendency nor the moral delinquency of *our* conduct in withholding or unduly limiting our contributions.

Here, then, my friends, is our argument to you, the men of this generation.

The future lies at your feet, waiting to receive at your hand the impress of its character and destiny. You are charged by God with the welfare of your children. The trust is binding as the authority of God, weighty as the worth and immortality of the soul. The obligation which it brings extends to the use of all available helps for discharging it. The ordinances of the Christian Church are a powerful means of advancing the highest interests of your children—directly, by bearing on their own minds, and, indirectly, by elevating the tone of general society—and thus preparing for them a stage on which they will have to do battle with a less virulent power of evil. By the authority of God; the claims of everlasting creatures whose felicity depends on you, and whose best interests God has bound you as parents, and ye have doubly bound yourselves as *Christian* parents, to promote; the yearnings of your own fatherly affections; and the aspirations of your Christian hearts after the perpetuation of the Church of Christ, with all its fulness of blessing, you are urgently called on to maintain in efficiency all the ordinances of the gospel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUTY, IN ITS RIGHT PERFORMANCE—WITH LOVE TO THE
LORD JESUS—HUMILITY.

HITHERTO we have been opening up the great fountains of authority on this subject. Now our attention must be directed to the streams which issue from them. The obligation to contribute of our worldly substance for the support of ordinances has been proved; now we have to illustrate the mode of carrying it out. Previously, the design was to *stimulate* the conscience; now, it is to *guide* it.

There are several properties the possession of which is essential to the true, full, and acceptable discharge of this duty. All our contributions of support to gospel ordinances must *spring from hearty love to the Lord Jesus, and attachment to His service*; must be characterised by *humility, cheerfulness, and regularity*; and in amount must *bear due proportion to our means, and be sufficient to secure a comfortable maintenance to the minister*.

1. Our contributions must spring from hearty love to the Lord Jesus.

This is a fundamental requisite. It is essential to the validity of *every* Christian act, and of this among the rest. The gracious Lord is the *great centre* of all the thoughts and feelings that fill the Christian bosom. Self has been turned out of the heart as its ruling aim and end. This *old* centre of power is now drawn into the general movement round the *new*. Christian feelings and acts are genuine only in so far as they regard Him. Every true disciple of Jesus will admit

this—will rejoice in it. In Christian ethics it is an axiom. But not the less do we need to be reminded of it. The heart is ever swinging back to its old centre. We have need to be on the watchtower daily, to detect and counteract the treacherous movement.

The most common form which this wrong tendency takes, in connexion with the duty of contributing, is to substitute stealthily the *desire of reputation* among men for *the true love of Jesus*. The Christian man goes about the duty calmly, seriously, heartily, and with no apprehension of anything wrong, or in danger of going wrong. At first his intention is directed rightly. His eye rests adoringly on the self-sacrificing Lord, and the eye affects the heart with joy at the thought of yielding Him this tribute. Insensibly his eye *relaxes*, then *averts*, its gaze. He goes on, however. By and by he bethinks him of looking inwards. And, lo ! he finds his heart almost entirely occupied with thoughts pointing to the opinions of men. Vile self is back again—a viper in the holy of holies. This deceit is often practised ; and most adroitly. No marvel ; the false “angel of light” has his hand on it, grudging Christ the honour, and His disciple the holy pleasure, of such a tribute. Christian men ! ye have need of circumspection here. With all true devotion to your Lord, and love to His ordinances, and high-minded desire to yield His servants a comfortable maintenance, there may creep in at the base of your feelings a secret reference to the opinions and applause of men. And as it is *good* men that will most readily present themselves to the mind, the deceit is all the more delicately perfect. Not less real, however, is the displacement of your Lord, and the denial of His just rights. The approbation of the good may be always prized and welcomed as the *consequence* of Christian action—never sought as its *end*. Nor does it lessen, but rather augment the subtlety, and, therefore, the insidious *power*, of this self-seeking vanity, that a Christian

man can sincerely say, "I rejoice in giving. It refreshes *me*. It will bring encouragement, perhaps stimulus, to *others*, when *they see it*." If this Christian man will reflect, he will see that he has, in these last words of his, *followed his subscription into the published list*. And here he treads on dangerous ground. For, from the point at which he contemplates this result of his contributing, the transition is easy to a quiet complacency of feeling in which his name seems gathering round it special notice, and winning for its owner special regard. These public registers of Christian liberality are useful, as log-books of the Church, marking her rate of outward progress, and affording also a theme of refreshing gratitude, as well as a means of powerful stimulus. But there is need of watching that they make it not too easy and too tempting a thing to "let the left hand know what the right hand doeth." They give a mischievous facility for gratifying the inferior motive. And is it not to be feared that we can regard them as only approximately representing the amount of genuine love to the Lord Jesus, and desire to advance His cause? Can we doubt that the space occupied by the contributions is considerably larger than that occupied by the pure feelings? The appearance overlaps the reality. The issue of notes exceeds the amount of bullion. But what then? If it be true, that in the whole sum of contributions a certain proportion must be regarded as the sign of unwitting or deliberate vanity—not of true affection to the heavenly Saviour—shall not *we* strive with all the more wakeful energy to bring *our own* feelings and contributions into better correspondence? Let *us* prayerfully and studiously exclude all side reference to the approbation of men. Poor worms of the dust! what avails the breath of their praise, though it poured from the lips of a unanimous world. Let us fix our eye more steadily on that glorious Lord who is *in Himself* incomparably excellent, and is *to us* a mighty Redeemer from wrath, the procurer of peace, and purity, and joy—a king, a

shepherd, a friend on earth and in the heavens for ever. Blessed Lord ! to render Thee the outward gift, and withhold the inward love, is to rob Thee of half Thy glory, and to lessen the joy which Thou lovest best.

In thus pleading the paramount claims of the Lord Jesus, as against the stealthy reference of the heart to mere human applause, we are by no means to be understood as excluding from the category of proper motives either *affection to the Christian minister*, or *anxious and deliberate reference to the interests of the soul*. A motive may be *inferior* without being *improper* or *unlawful*. Both of these, if kept in their proper place of subordination, are auxiliary, not adverse, to the grand ruling affection. (1.) A minister is Christ's servant, and the respectful love that greets him is reflected back on his Master. He is a *gift*, and true regard to him embraces the heavenly *Giver* with a love incomparably deeper. "He that receiveth you receiveth me," said the Lord himself; and never did Christian heart glow with adoring love to *Him* without clasping *them* in its cordial embrace. There is, indeed, a danger that the heart's affectionate regard should stop short at the *channel* of grace, leaving the Great Fountain without due tribute. This is criminal idolatry of man, ungrateful robbery of God. It soon punishes itself. There is attached to it a self-acting power of retribution. It will stint the supply of grace, leave the soul dry and unrefreshed, dwarf and enfeeble its growth, and bring down deserved contempt on its puerile folly. He who fondly worships a man must be content with what man can furnish—dry husks of knowledge, cold arguments, arid rhetoric, that have in them neither the fire nor the unction of heaven. But let not the follower of Christ be driven by the fear of *abusing* respectful and affectionate regard for the minister, to the neglect or suppression of this amiable and praiseworthy feeling. Cherish and encourage the servants of Christ. Hold them high in honour "for their work's sake." When

you contribute for their maintenance, let your personal regard to them bear its part unblushingly among the moving impulses. It is a just and generous feeling. Give it free play,—but reverently, under the eye of the Great Master. It will do your own soul a benefit. (2.) And surely it needs not be proved that *the welfare of our own souls* is a legitimate motive for the support of Christian ordinances. We saw before that it is one of the grand fountains of authority binding to the discharge of this duty. We are under solemn obligation to do the best for our immortal souls, and to employ all available means for securing this result. Fear not, then, to admit into your view, as a distinct and powerful motive, the advantage of your own souls. The Lord himself appealed to this true and rational self-love. So did His apostles. So does the whole economy of grace. It would be unnatural to forbid it. What other fulcrum is there on which to rest the lever of gospel warnings and gospel welcomes? The weight of eternal interests—the vast and pressing necessities of an immortal spirit, with unimaginable capacities of joy and misery—oh! what burden of anxieties can be too heavy, what intensity of excited emotion too great, for these? Give them their full influence. The more you are overwhelmed with the sense of infinite need, the more will you cast yourself without reserve and without pride upon the glorious Surety. And this will kindle and fan a flame of adoring and grateful love that will dissolve and dissipate all the selfishness of the heart. Fear not to bring your desire of good to your soul closely into contact with your Christian beneficence.

2. The duty of supporting gospel ordinances must be performed with *humility*.

It is natural for creatures, originally made to “live” by *obeying*, to revert to this “law of righteousness.” The bent to obedience is in the nature still, even when the *ability* is gone; nay, even after the humbled heart has gratefully received the

righteousness of another. Self-righteousness *lives* yet, though it does not *reign*. The treacherous heart slips back insensibly to the original way of life—covertly building again in the shade the foundation which it cordially demolished before. Now, in this way, the offering of worldly substance made to the support of Christian ordinances, may be abused into a ground of confidence, a secret source of self-elevation. Do you not sometimes find rising in your mind, without licence either of your judgment, your conscience, or your faith, a warm and pleasurable feeling, the analysis of which presents a large proportion of *self-approbation*, and a hidden thought of *deserving* something in the sight of God? True; the self-righteous basis of this pleasure is far in the background. There may not even be the consciousness of its existence. But it is there, and in active operation, tinting and vitiating the whole springs of Christian liberality. Yes, the *vanity* which stealthily seeks for human applause is not more mischievous in its power than the *pride* which covertly builds in the byways of the heart a pile of merits on which it may get nearer, to invite the smile of God. Fond and criminal folly! It *dishonours* the incarnate Lord by impeaching His perfect righteousness, and *robs* Him by diverting to another channel, however briefly, a portion of His tribute of unfaltering trust and grateful praise. Most costly folly! which brings present drought upon the spirit, and for which the penitent heart must pay in shame, and sharp regrets, and self-condemning humiliation. Oh! there is need of wakeful tenderness in every act of Christian liberality, to keep the fountain of feeling and action pure from the intrusion of self, to suppress the first rising of that complacent feeling which would make us stand in the midst of our contributions, like the Pharisee, whispering even in the ear of God, “I pay tithes of all that I possess.” Let us look hastily away from our most “liberal devisings” and doings. They are *tribute-money*, not *purchase-money*. A thousandfold more

than all you have given, or can give, is due to Him, who, “though rich” in boundless joy and glory, “became poor for us;” and who by His blessed life of purity, and death of atoning virtue, left nothing for His followers to do but to trust and love, to praise and serve Him, to make soul and body, and the whole sum of feelings, powers, and possessions, a “living sacrifice” to Him. Then let us strive and pray for the single eye, as well as the liberal hand. Let all our contributions be viewed as debts, not gifts—as offerings of gratitude and seals of joyful subjection, not as the basis of a *claim* or the means of recommendation to God. That was the right spirit of giving which humbly exclaimed, in the midst of royal munificence, and the abounding liberality of an exulting nation, “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.” The little rills that run from liberal hands into the treasury of God, dropped first from the hand of heavenly bounty.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DUTY, IN ITS RIGHT PERFORMANCE—CHEERFULNESS—
REGULARITY.

3. THIS duty must be performed with *cheerfulness*.

“God loveth a cheerful giver.” So said His apostle, when the wants of the poor were to be supplied. The same thing may be said with truth when Christian ordinances, and especially that of the ministry, are to be supported. Cheerfulness includes *willingness*, *heartly interest*, and *well-pleased joyfulness*. He who gives thus enjoys that “love” which is “better than life.” The Infinite One, whose smile lights up heaven, looks on him with complacent regard. How great the blessedness, and how enviable! But he who gives *grudgingly*, with his longing eye looking wistfully after his gift; or *carelessly*, throwing his gift into the treasury, as he might a similar pittance to get rid of a beggar’s importunity; or *dejectedly*, with the air of a confessor, gazing on the gap which his contribution has made—shall meet with no such approval. His gift will not be accepted. No offering is welcome without the heart. Now, as Christian men are accessible to these improper feelings—though not altogether nor always under their power—and as temptations to them are pressing in importunately on every hand, it becomes a serious matter to direct aright their habit of thought and feeling on the subject. Let us look into it.

God has emphatically *shewn* His love of cheerful giving in the very structure of the Bible. How often has He turned aside from the narrative of great battles, political movements, national vicissitudes, to detail the peaceful triumphs of pious

liberality. He loved the cheerful givers. He blessed them at the time ; and for all coming generations He registered their deeds and preserved their honour. This is a most significant fact. The Divine Spirit makes His *one* book for the human race perpetuate the record of willing gifts for the support of ordinances, through the whole period of the Church's history. The *entries* date from Moses to Malachi ; and a new series begins with the open-hearted liberality of Pentecostal days. These entries stand there still, and will stand while the world lasts. God himself has become the chronicler of willing and liberal contributions. It has been done with evident cordiality. "The Lord *loveth* a cheerful giver."

But, apart from the power of these successive records as evidences of the *Divine feeling* in the matter, the instances of cheerful giving are in themselves full of refreshing and stimulating power. "They are written for our learning." Let us glance at some of them. When the Redeemer of Israel announced his determination to "dwell in a tent," like His wandering people, and opened the lists for their offerings, at once a tide of spontaneous liberality poured in from the willing-hearted ; so that at last, amid distracting abundance, "the people were restrained from giving." Strange perplexity ! Very happy, but very rare ! And the abounding liberality which caused it was of the most triumphant kind. Yes, *triumphant* ; for it rose over great barriers. Not only did "wise-hearted" women spin rich cloths for curtains, and the princes give costly stones ; but *spices* too, so needful for themselves in a desert, were freely parted with ; and, most difficult of all, men and women of all ranks gave up their *jewels*—though these were *precious*, as being of gold and silver—*prized*, as comely ornaments—*above all price*, as the memorials of that eventful morning on which their ransomed multitudes left the land of bondage, laden with the gifts of vanquished enemies.

Long afterwards, another emergency called for a new national

contribution. The aged and venerable David had gathered a vast and varied store of wealth to build “a palace for the Lord God.” And when he proclaimed among the assembled thousands, “Who is willing to consecrate his services this day unto the Lord?” the nation’s heart responded eagerly, by filling the royal treasury with all precious things. Princes and people “offered willingly;” and, to all, that day of liberal giving was a day of exulting joy. The Lord *rewarded* the cheerful givers.

When Hezekiah cleansed the house of the Lord, and restored His interrupted worship, the “*free-hearted*” brought their offerings, and their tithes of field and flock, in overflowing abundance. In the revival days of his great-grandson, Josiah, it was the same. That brave young monarch, after carrying his reforming movement northwards among the idols of the rival kingdom, laboured “with all his might” to revive neglected ordinances in his own capital; and for this purpose he gave large offerings himself, and led the way to his princes, who “gave willingly” to the Divine service. So was it in the days of Ezra, when the captive Jews brought forth their hoarded treasures, and “offered freely” “gold and silver and precious things.”

These instances are enough. They are full of power, and also of reproof, as “ensamples” to us. The whole people gave with hearty joyfulness; and the very record seems to glow as it ever and anon repeats that favourite word, they offered *willingly*. If *they* did so in the twilight of revelation—when truth spoke in whispers from type and symbol, and when outward services recalled the memory of events, which, though radiant with Divine glory, brought only temporal blessings—how much more cheerful should be *our* support of ordinances which are *memorials* of far more glorious triumphs, and *means* more efficacious for enlightening, moving, and sanctifying. So did the early followers of Jesus feel; and so they acted, not only in the flush of newly-awakened love, when every heart was full, and every

hand was open, "and they had all things common," so that the company of apostles lived on the Church's cheerful bounty, but afterwards, when gospel influences ran in ordinary channels. For then, as the record tells approvingly, the Churches gladly maintained the Christian ministry, not even Thessalonica refusing, though her contributions were declined for a special reason; and many a "Mnason, an old disciple, with whom they lodged," and many a Gaius, the "host" of early evangelists, was stirred up by his liberal heart to "devise liberal things" for the sustentation of gospel agencies; while from *Philippian* hearts there seemed a perennial overflow of generous, joyful, and willing-hearted contributions to the apostles' support and comfort.

But, looking now away from the *history* of cheerful givings to the *rationale* of the *cheerfulness*, who does not see how comely and how reasonable it is?

Does not loyalty give freely and cheerfully? Yes; and it grudges not to give the ruling power its fixed portion first. And can we allot to God our King only the *leavings* of our means? Do we serve our queen so? Would she *submit* to be served so? Her dues are absolute. They depend on no contingencies. They are liable to no deductions. And shall not *God's income-tax* be apportioned *first*, ungrudgingly, from the gross sum of our means? Can we permit the intrusion of inferior claims, while the Redeemer's portion is unfixed? Shall we not rather give His ordinances the "preference share" of our means, and make other interests shape themselves accordingly? Oh! if we could but carry about with us the conviction that our heavenly Lord has *the first bond over our property*, it would make us render His tribute with a cheerful heart and a ready alacrity.

Does not love give cheerfully? Ah, yes! By a mighty affinity it draws out the heart, and makes it one with the object loved, so that to give is no sacrifice but a pleasure.

What parent grudges to his child the best he has? What loving child will not with cheerfulness repay the boon? To a husband's heart, are not his partner's wants his own, and his substance hers? Christians! love has made you one with Christ. That love is richer, deeper, holier than all earthly affections together. And whenever it truly works within, you *cannot but* give cheerfully. The warm affection expands till the full heart overflow in deeds of joyful liberality.

Does not gratitude give cheerfully? It does; and feels it a new favour to make acknowledgments of the old. Is there any creature in the universe under so many obligations as the Christian? None. His case is emphatically peculiar. Angels can join him when he sings, "Worthy is the Lamb;" but their harps are silent when his song proceeds, "Thou hast redeemed us with thy blood." Pardon—a jewel from the cliffs of Sinai—"peace that passeth all understanding"—a dawning *purity* that ranks him with the holy, and that will one day burst into the sunshine of unsullied perfection—these richest gifts in the treasury of God, most dearly won, most freely bestowed—who can calculate their value? What sum of adoring gratitude can adequately acknowledge them? Their of felicities like these! wilt thou not rejoice with exceeding joy to support the ordinances that procure and augment them? Oh! is it not shame and sin to offer a grudging gift with careless or joyless heart?

Lastly, Does not *he* give cheerfully who *gets* an equivalent? and more cheerfully he who gets more? The world's traffic is just a giving to get more. Ay, and a man will give cheerfully with the *hope* only of getting more. A thousand casualties lie between the giving and the getting. A ship's cargo depends on the seaworthiness of the vessel, and the captain's honesty, and the seaman's efficiency, and the motion of wayward winds. A farmer's gains are at the mercy of the changeable weather. But in supporting the means of grace there are

no such casualties. He who lays out a little in maintaining ordinances, and who uses these ordinances rightly, will infallibly draw a large and immediate interest. Here is an investment *without risk*. God himself insures the returns. What Christian man will not most gladly give a little of “the carnal things,” that he may reap largely of the “spiritual?” Did ever any hear a murmur about the support of ordinances from the lips of one who drew from them spiritual refreshment? The best recipe for cheerful giving is, *Get more good*—strive more, pray more, to find these precious ordinances “wells of salvation”—and you will feel it an honour and a joy to help in digging them.

4. This duty must be performed *with regularity*.

The Jews of old paid annually to the temple treasury half a shekel. The first-fruits and the tithes were given for the support of public ordinances. These were *regular* contributions. The same regularity is enjoined by the apostle in collecting for the poor: “Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him”—a command as appropriate in the case before us. And what Scripture examples enforce, reason highly recommends.

The ordinances need continual support—our spiritual wants need continual supply; the *support* of ordinances *must* therefore *be* continual. The holy feelings of loyalty, love, and gratitude, and aspirations after good, from which this support flows, are perennial, so also *will be* the support.

Regular contribution has, in many ways, the advantage over its opposite.

First, *It makes giving easier to those who have slender means*. “To the poor the gospel is preached;” and *by* the poor, in largest numbers, if not in largest amount of contributions, the gospel is supported. Now, regular giving by little is, for such, far easier than less frequent givings in larger sums. In the great majority of cases, our labouring population are paid at intervals

of a week or a month, some every day; and those who are paid at more distant terms have commonly some little ways of bringing in money. Now, it is easy to see how much more readily a certain sum can be raised by the gradual accumulation of littles than by deducting it all at once from the payment of one week or month. In this way the industrious poor may secure, at little sacrifice, the honour and the gratification of raising great sums and doing mighty good. They *have done* so. In our day, the gathering of farthing to farthing, and the associating of man with man, have done wonders in the sphere of Christian liberality, as well as on the stage of political action. Little rills of contribution, meeting and mingling, have swollen to a mighty river; and the thirsty land, "well watered" now, has drunk refreshing draughts. Our own favoured country, over all its length and breadth, is covered with the tokens and the triumphs of this regular giving. That great growth of a Church—only thirteen years old—has filled her marvellous treasury more from the systematic liberality of the poor than from the rich gifts of the wealthy. The sister Churches, running side by side in the race of voluntary offering for the support of gospel ordinances, are, some of them, perhaps even more distinguished for this pervasive liberality—in the measure of their means and numbers. Most fervently we say, "Go on and prosper." "Much land remains to be possessed." Let the toiling and sweating Christians rise to the consciousness of their power, and put it forth in adding mite to mite with persevering regularity, and their united contributions, going far beyond the supply of *ministerial* wants, shall provide for the world's white harvest-fields a new and mighty increase of *missionary* labour.

But, for *rich* as well as poor, regular giving brings with it great advantages. For, secondly, The regular discharge of *this* Christian duty, as of every other, makes it easier. This is a general principle, applicable in all cases and to every rate of con-

tribution. Habit makes the performance of the duty “come natural” to the giver. A deep channel is worn in which mind and heart move on almost involuntarily. There is a practised readiness, a holy facility, in the movement. The original friction, once overcome, gradually diminishes. He who gives only an occasional contribution has, on every occasion, to contend anew with this retarding influence; while the man who gives systematically is constantly increasing his own power of motion, and diminishing the resistance. On his side there is thus a double advantage. Besides, regular contribution for the support of ordinances secures in its own favour an *established verdict* of conscience. The mighty overplus of motives which determined to action at first, the strong and heavenly *obligations* which set the liberal hand aworking at the command of conscience, are not called upon at every stage to make good their authority. There is no fighting for power now. The reign of these imperial motives and obligations is acknowledged; and, with undisputed claims, they have settled in the seat of power. It were well, indeed, if this authority often shewed its sceptre and proved its rights; not as if at the demand of an enemy, and for the purpose of having its claims questioned, but that the unsteady heart might be, consciously and deliberately, brought afresh under the shadow of its solemn and quickening power. And, in truth, its pressure is never absent from the Christian heart, though it speak in muffled words. But that is the most healthy and vigorous state of feeling in which conscience is anticipated and outrun by love, and, therefore, does not need to be always asserting its authority in a formal manner. Contributions then flow naturally, in a continuous stream, from the depths of a loyal and grateful heart. True Christian principle is not an *intermittent* spring, but a *perennial* fountain. No better test could we have of the sincerity of *our* principle than its calm and durable power. Small regular givings are too petty for *pride*, too troublesome for *worldly indifference*,

and draw in returns of praise too scanty for the appetite of *vanity*. *Self-righteousness* would find a richer feast in one great gift than in the aggregate of many smaller ones. *An evil conscience* might sternly summon forth a contribution large as the crime for which it sought expiation. But none of these can, as a general rule, be reckoned equal to the task of *systematic* self-denial, such as regular giving demands. "The love of the Spirit" can alone produce this. The fountain that sends forth a constant stream on earth must first have drunk "water of the rain of heaven."

Thirdly, The regular discharge of this duty strengthens the principles from which it flows.

In the natural world the stream would drain the fountain unless fresh supplies poured in. *This* stream not only keeps clear the channel, and flows with growing ease, but feeds the hidden spring. It is the same with every practical duty. The regular exercise of *love* in kindly offices gives it new vigour. The doings of *charity* add power to the feelings of *pity*. Even so systematic givings exert a backward force upon the heart—strengthening there all its holy feelings of love, and gratitude, and loyal devotion to the Saviour. Bodily exercise not only strengthens the muscles, but warms the frame, purifies the blood, quickens the action of the heart, diffuses over the whole system a genial and healthful life. But to do this it must be *regular*. And he who takes regular exercise in the path of Christian liberality will find it making, not only givings easier, but the fountains of giving deeper. Liberal doings will foster liberal feelings.

Then let us gird ourselves for this labour of love. Let us miss no season of contributing, either through indolence or selfishness. Next time the omission would be easier. Beware of the first gap. Close it up quickly. *Selfishness* may suddenly come in to perpetuate what *forgetfulness* began. There is a perilous descent at the feet of every contributor.

The first step may lead him on to shut his hand and seal his heart. And what then? His shrivelled soul dies of spiritual drought. Dreadful possibility! but real and imminent. To save ourselves from it, to advance the systematic growth of our spiritual nature, and to secure for the Christian Church a large and solid revenue, shall we not resolutely set ourselves to make our givings for the support of gospel ordinances as regular as our receipt of blessing from them?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUTY, IN ITS RIGHT PERFORMANCE—IN FAIR PROPORTION
TO AMOUNT OF MEANS.

5. THE support rendered must be *such as to bear a fair proportion to our means*.

In the Christian Church, there is no law fixing the precise proportion. The law of *tithes* binds no longer. But though it *commands* not now, may it not *instruct*? Is it not to be held as indicating generally the proportion which it would be reasonable and proper to give to those who discharge now the duties that devolved on the priests and Levites of old. At the very least, this Divine *law*, as it passed away, has left behind an emphatic *intimation* that the support should be *highly liberal*.

The precise amount is, therefore, to be settled in the court of conscience; and into this point it is not the sphere of any other man, or body of men, to pry. But there are certain general principles which may help the Christian conscience in determining its duty in this matter.

(1.) The proportion to be given for the support of ordinances should be adjusted *prospectively*. It must be done with deliberate look at the amount of our income. This department of our expenditure must appear in our calculations alongside of others. It must not be left to accident. Its portion must not be "the *crumbs* which fall from the table." Who would dare set the ministers of Jesus Christ to "gather up the fragments," after inferior claims had been satisfied? Shall Christian men live in easy indulgence, leaving for this most glorious object only a *possible margin*? Shall they give a determinate place

and provision to other demands, and leave this to lie, a Lazarus, at their gate? This would be to dishonour and defraud the King of Zion. Subjects of our Redeemer, are you acting so? It is grievously wrong. "Ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, till ye have brought an offering to your God."

(2.) The settled portion must not bear alone the burden of unexpected claims. Such claims may appear without warning. Unforeseen emergencies may bring them even to the most sagacious and provident. What shall be done with them? Shall they be laid for discharge at the door of *this* department of our expenditure? We fear it is often done. The allotment for Christ's house and servants, even when made at first in all sincerity, and without reservation, is the first to feel the new pressure. Why so? Why should *it* be made to bear most heavily, or perhaps to bear *alone*, the weight of these unforeseen claims? Is it not enough that it bear its own share? Ah! let it be sacredly guarded, for it is a holy thing. Though not yet actually "cast into the treasury," its destination to the service of Christ should throw around it a protective charm. Let it be touched reluctantly, and only at the demand of an urgent emergency.

(3.) This sacred portion must take rank among the necessities, and before the luxuries, of life. We condemn not luxuries. As the index and means of refinement, as the products of well-paid industry, as the triumphs and stimulants of art, as the procurers of comfort, they are "the creatures of God, to be received with thanksgiving." But if they be indulged in to the extent of hampering or hindering Christian liberality, they have passed their province. *Sin* begins at this point. *Danger* begins long before. We need to keep the curb-rein tight upon selfish indulgence. And in laying out the map of our expenditure, we must leave the details of bodily or mental luxury to be filled in only after we have determined, deliberately and

conscientiously, the supplies due to the great ruling necessities of life, and among them the maintenance of a gospel ministry. Yes! self-gratification, whether decking the person, ornamenting the dwelling, glistening in the equipage, lolling on the couch, or feeding on frothy tales of things that never were, are, or shall be, is a crime and a cruelty, when it drinks up resources that should go to the supply of Christian ordinances, and thus robs God of His tribute, our souls of the full benefit of an efficient ministry, and the world of its mightiest means of blessing.

(4.) The amount must be determined as a matter of individual duty. Men too often "measure themselves by themselves." Herein "they are not *wise*." Neither yet are they *honest*. Their contribution is not the dictate of conscience and the representative of its power. It is the sign of deference to general sentiment, and measures the amount of their fear of "singularity." Sometimes it is *more* than is meet; for the large givings of others are an incentive to vanity. Generally it is *less*; for the small givings of others are a blind to conscience, and an apology for narrow selfishness. But is not this trifling criminally with a solemn question and a momentous interest? What matters it to me that my neighbour, who might and should give a *large* contribution, gives only a *small* one, calling it "the widow's mite"? Am I to be taken in with this miserable self-deception? Must I go over the *list* to see what he or others have contributed, and adjust my donation accordingly? No, no! It is unmanly. It is unchristian. Let *conscience* have its perfect work. Let the weighty claims of gospel ordinances be intelligently and impartially pondered. Let the convictions begotten by this prayerful study bear directly, and in full force, upon the decision of the question, "How much is it my duty to bestow on an object so incalculably important?" This will be a Christian act; and it will meet Christ's approval. So acted the "poor widow." Her con-

tribution was manifestly the offering of the understanding, the conscience, and the heart ; for it was her *all*, and was given in *quiet humility*. The Lord is *still* “ *sitting over against the treasury*.” Who would not *give* like her, to *get* again that approving smile of His? And does not His emphatic approbation of *her* gift furnish a general rule for *ours*?

But, lastly, our contributions must, in amount, be an answer to the question, “ How much would I feel bound to give in order to prevent the withdrawal of ordinances altogether?” If, by some mysterious providence, this dire calamity were threatened, and it depended entirely on the amount of *your* subscription whether this mighty apparatus of heavenly grace were to continue or to cease its working, what amount of means would you sacrifice to secure its continuance? Gaze into the tremendous vacancy which would be produced—see “ the ways of Zion ” untrodden, and her holy rites uncelebrated, and silent Sabbaths mourning the loss of the preacher’s living voice, with its words of warning, quickening, and comfort! What will you give to avert this catastrophe? How much of the “ carnal ” are you prepared to surrender, that you may be able to keep the “ spiritual?” Christian men! this question presses for an answer. You cannot evade the high responsibility implied in it. You cannot throw that responsibility on others. You cannot, must not, ease conscience by looking at the ordinances as existing now in vigour and with competent provision, as if this lightened or removed *your* obligation in the matter. What would you give to secure the maintenance, and to promote the efficiency, of these blessed means of grace, if *both* depended on *you*?

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUTY, IN ITS RIGHT PERFORMANCE—EFFICIENCY.

6. THE amount must be such as will secure the *efficient* support of ordinances. As before, it is *ministerial* support that is mainly in question. Let us look closely at the matter in this light.

It will be of advantage to gather our fundamental conceptions of what is implied in an efficient provision for the ministry from the dealings of God with His servants under the old economy.

First, The *giving was universal*: "None shall appear before me empty." He who is too poor to afford a pigeon must give one-tenth of an ephah of flour.

Second, The *offerings were to be of the best quality*: "Pure oil," "*fine flour*," victims "*without blemish*." "All the *best* of the oil, all the best of the wine, and all the best of the wheat."

Third, The *amount was abundant*. It was of two kinds, *fluctuating* and *fixed*. Of the former were the innumerable offerings made on special occasions. A great part of each went to the officials of the sanctuary. Of this nature, also, were the "second tithes," a sort of secondary assessment which marked every *third* year with peculiar joyfulness; for the grateful people issued invitations freely to "the poor, the stranger, and the *Levite*."

But the chief support of the servants of the sanctuary was drawn from the *fixed* revenue. Every Jew gave his annual *half-shekel*. *Stated sacrifices were numerous*—the *first-fruits* of

everything that were theirs, of fields, flocks, and herds—a very large supply, from “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

The *tenth part* of all the produce of the country formed the largest item of their support. This was given as compensation for the loss of their share in the inheritance. It was the rent which the Great Landlord took from the other tribes to give to His ministers. It was theirs by right. There was nothing eleemosynary in it. The wise Lord settled their claim to it on an immoveable basis; he made it a fundamental law of the constitution; and He demanded the regular and cheerful payment of it as *due in equity* as well as *due by His own express injunction*. Now, this supply was a most abundant one. This is evident at the first glance. But there are two considerations which shew it with peculiar emphasis:—The Levitical proportion of the *land* would have been only *one-thirteenth*, whereas a *tenth* was assigned them from *its produce*. To this add the other fact, that the tribe of Levi was greatly *less numerous* than any of the others—at their first numbering (Num. iii. 39) mustering only 22,000 males from *a month* upward, while Manasseh, the smallest of the others, was able to furnish 32,200 *men above twenty*. So that this *small tribe* had a *large proportion* of the fruits of the land.

Nor is this all. Most generously the God of Israel, in many ways, and on many occasions, enforced the claims of His servants. At the very beginning of their official existence, when a loose sum of money was to be disposed of, arising from payments made by 273 first-born—the excess of that class over the Levites—it was thrown at once, freely and without condition, among the revenues of the sanctuary.—(Num. iii. 49, 50.) So delicately careful was He of their interest, that He made the quantity and quality, nay the very *time* of the offerings, matter of special legislation: “Thou shalt *not delay* to offer thy first-fruits.” What considerate tenderness in these

few words! And continually this same tender care comes out. Through the whole system of laws there runs this chorus, "Thou shalt not forsake the Levite." And it deserves particular notice, that a separate enactment was made in favour of any Levite who, moved by a holy impulse, came to Jerusalem to carry on his sacred ministry there. Let us mark it well. A sufficient maintenance was to be assigned him on the spot, "besides that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony."—(Deut. xviii. 8.) *His sustentation allowance was quite independent of his private fortune.* No inquisitorial calculation of other means was permitted—no deduction from his dues made on that account. A fair remuneration was given, and no questions asked.

So much as to the *maintenance*; now as to the *dwelling*. To the priests were allotted thirteen cities, and to the Levites thirty-five—a very large proportion—and not *bare habitations*, but with large* suburbs attached, containing hundreds of acres, for gardens, offices, and pasture land. Both lands and houses were inalienable.

Now, looking at the whole of this provision, are we not presented here with a most beautiful picture of manses, glebes, and liberal stipends? It is of *God's* drawing. He means it to be copied. Did He deal so generously and so honourably with His servants of old, and shall not *we* imitate Him in our treatment of His servants now? Did He bind the whole nation to supply them, not with a competence merely, but with abundance—with delicate care affirming their *right* to it, demanding *prompt payment* of it, and often and earnestly reminding the people of their claims—and can *we* narrowly stint the allowance and begrudge the comforts of the ministers of Christ?

* Estimates of their extent range from 300 to 2000 acres. There is to us much obscurity in the commanded mode of measurement.—(Num. xxxv. 4, 5.) The writer is inclined to suppose the space surrounding each city to have formed a circular annulus of about 900 acres.

It is not just. It is not generous. It is not wise. But, worst of all, it contravenes what we have seen to be *God's views of an efficient ministry*.

It was manifestly the design of the great King of Israel to set priests and Levites high in a position of honour and influence. And for this purpose He was careful to bind over to them an amount of temporal support which gave them an honourable independence, and afforded peculiar facilities for cultivating their own minds, and for communicating to the tribes among whom they were scattered a high rate of instruction from a commanding elevation. The Levite was a man of consequence. There was power in his social position ; there was power in his high culture of mind. Both were hallowed and deepened by his sacred character. He was the literary man and the theologian, the teacher, and often the judge, of the district ; and a generous God gave him the means of preserving his dignity and influence.

From this liberal dealing of God with His servants under the Old Testament economy, there results an important *inference*, which is also, on its own independent grounds, a *dictate of right reason* and of *enlightened experience*. But it deserves a separate chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE EFFICIENT MAINTENANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS SUCH AS WILL SECURE THE PRESENCE IN IT OF THE GREATEST NUMBER OF INFLUENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE GREATEST VIGOUR.

THESE elements are numerous and varied. We shall best learn them from God's own Word. The Levitical institute supplies a list of them. Man's highest wisdom affirms their importance. They are such as these—social standing, comfort, freedom from corroding anxieties, leisure and means to pursue the cultivation of his mind and the acquisition of needful knowledge.

1. *Social standing*.—The idea of a minister of Christ depending for his efficiency, even in the smallest degree, on his position in society may be jeered at by the unthinking. We have known the *thoughtful* stagger at it. "Position, indeed! What position had these rough *fishermen*, with their homely garb and simple habits? What position had the *tent-maker*, humbly pursuing his craft in Corinth among the throngs of the titled and the wealthy? *Would they have used* it as a means of influence? The cause was spiritual—this influence is carnal."

You reason plausibly. But reflect a little. They had what to them was more than high social standing—they were endowed with healing powers. Now, mark, this was not essentially different in character from social position as a *means of influence*. Neither can touch the heart; neither can

savingly impress the truth. Both can call attention to it; both can recommend it. In *measure of power* they are very different; in *nature* they rank together. Both set the Christian minister on a vantage-ground. And if the “carnal” influence enforce gospel truth, is it not *hallowed* by the holy service?

But let us admit that the objection has a tincture of truth in it. This social standing may be abused to pamper lordly pride, or be made a conspicuous stage for vanity to strut on. But this has no weight against its legitimate *use*.

It is also true, on the other hand, that high powers of mind, hallowed by a lofty aim, and moved by the mighty impulse of a heavenly love, will overleap all barriers of social distinction, and win an exalted place even among the world’s “wise, and mighty, and noble.” The exhibition of pre-eminent godliness, or fervent zeal, or laborious and self-forgetting disinterestedness, or melting eloquence, will make room for a man in any rank, even though his means be scanty, and his garb homely, and his dwelling humble. But the grand question is not, *Can* a minister be efficient *without* the advantage of social elevation? but, *Will* he not be *more efficient with* it? And on this point there can be no doubt. The accessories of dress, dwelling, manners, are indeed very small things compared with a minister’s true dignity, sacred authority, and themes of momentous import. But, though weak as a lever, they are mighty as a fulcrum. Though weak as a main stream of influence, they are mighty as auxiliary rills. Both among *the upper and lower classes*, a Christian minister will find his social consideration investing his religious instructions with additional weight.

Among *the upper*: For, ranking *alongside* of them, he will be *above the level* of operation of those prejudices, incidental to their position, which tend to hinder the reception and mar the efficacy of gospel truth. Are these prejudices weak and

unreasonable? Some of them may be so. But they are not the less pernicious. And who would not gladly "fetch a compass" round a prejudice, if thereby he may save a soul? But, indeed, when we reflect that cultivated taste and feelings, as well as that unshackled freedom of thought and bearing which commands *respect*, and exerts a kingly *influence*, are intimately connected with an independent and honourable standing, we see at once how indispensable is the latter for a Christian minister. To be efficient among men of this stamp he must have a corresponding cultivation of taste and feeling. The moral affinity is necessary; so also is the social parity. Among *the lower classes* this social position is at least equally influential. Respect for superior station is not only a duty, but a *dictate of nature*. Among the mass of men it has the power of a habit, if not of an instinct. And when this strong influence blends with the authority of an ambassador of Christ, how mighty is the efficacy it adds! Uniform experience proves it. A high social standing makes a minister doubly effective as a *power of warning, rebuke, or encouragement*.

And does he not *deserve* to hold this honourable place? He is the servant of a King. He is the benefactor of his people. Has he not dearly won his honour by weary vigils, manifold studies, a long, laborious, and costly probation? Christian men! can you grudge or stint it? For *his* sake, and for the sake of *your own* and *your children's spiritual welfare*, we earnestly beg you to put him cheerfully in this high place of honourable independence. The God of Israel claimed this for His servants of old. The King of Zion claims it for His ministers now. And the honour you give *them* will be graciously accepted by *Him*. It will be highly valued. It will be well repaid. For you will thus serve yourselves heirs to His rich promise, "Them that honour me I will honour;" and invest with a more commanding influence for good the lessons of "them who are over you in the Lord."

2. *Comfort*.—Here again it may be said, “Why speak of comfort for a minister of Christ? What comforts had the *Master* himself? He had not where to lay His head. He suffered hunger. He toiled in thirst and weariness beneath the burning beams of an eastern sun at noon. And did He not tell His apostles to make up their minds to ‘bear the cross’? And did they not both *echo* the language and *exemplify* it? ‘Endure hardness,’ said Paul. He did so himself. What comfort had he in a wandering life? what comfort in the craftsman’s weary toil, and the prisoner’s cell, and the horrors of shipwreck, and the shame of bodily chastisement?”—But stop, my friend; in the first place, the inference which you draw about “taking up the cross” is wider in its range than suits *your* comfort, or helps your design; it applies to *you* also. Yes; and if you acted upon it in pecuniary matters, *your minister’s* cross would be much lighter. In the second place, *your analogy fails*. The conclusion is not in the premises. There was a *peculiarity* in the position and work both of the Master and His first servants, which puts them where no fair inference can be carried over from them to ministers now. Was not the Master toiling under the burden of a curse, which spread its dark shadow over the whole breadth of His mortal life? Yes! and He was wearing humanity in its bare and simple form, stripped of all accidents of wealth, and rank, and means of comfort; that He might meet man’s doom at the lowest, and be a brother of the meanest, and learn sympathy with the miserable. His first servants were *missionaries* more than *ministers*; and to gird themselves for fierce conflict with enemies, and painful endurance of sufferings, was a fundamental necessity of their office. And their spirit is living yet. Brainerd and Judson, Martyn and Williams, and a host of living heroes, have entered the fire willingly when it was needed. But why make martyrs without necessity? Why subject a minister, in the quiet and regular discharge of pas-

toral duty, to hardships proper only to *pioneers* in the gospel work? The *position and the duties are entirely dissimilar*; and no inference from the one to the other is valid.

Thus are we left free for the consideration of the proposition: the *possession of comfort contributes powerfully to the efficiency of a Christian minister*. In the case of other men, this is true, avowedly. In a settled community, comfort is one of the conditions of healthy, well-toned, regular, and sustained activity. Especially is this the case in connexion with those whose labour is mainly *mental*. Who does not know this? Who has not felt how much outward inconveniences and discomforts lower the integrity—the coherence—the continuous power of our mental operations? Bodily ailments mysteriously impair the health of our better and nobler part. A damp house, a smoky chimney, insufficient clothing, unsubstantial food, fuel doled out by niggard handfuls—these are small things, perhaps; and it is a minister's duty to bear them heroically without murmur. But though small to most men—small to every Christian, when considered as *private crosses* for faith and patience to struggle under—they are *not small when viewed as impediments in the way of ministerial working*. Insensibly they lower the spirits, fret the temper, mar the mind's buoyant and healthful tone, and spread an enfeebling influence over all its exercises. This holds true of ministers more than of most other men. Generally they are men whose preparatory studies have worn down their strength, and thus made comfort more than usually needful for them. We plead not for them as if they must be tended like children, or nursed as sickly plants. Far be this folly from us. They themselves would be the first to repudiate a treatment so detrimental to true humility, manly vigour, and real spiritual prosperity. But this danger is very rare. The rock ahead of most ministers lies in the opposite quarter. And we desire to "blazon it abroad," that the *mind is the minister's instrument*; that it is *keenly susceptible of impressions from without*; that

whatever affects its healthful and vigorous working, to the same extent affects the efficient discharge of ministerial labours; and, last of all, that there are, in fact, many servants of Christ in our land at this moment, faithful men, ennobled by their silent sacrifices, honoured of God as the channels of His redeeming mercy, destined yet “to shine as the stars for ever,” whose spirits are crushed, whose energies are broken, and whose usefulness is sadly hindered by the niggardly maintenance allotted to them, and even more by the display of unjust, unkind, ungenerous feeling which it affords.

Members of the Church of Christ! your ministers “are men of like passions with you.” Comfort acts on them as it does on you. Kind deeds done to them will waken gratitude, and cheer the heart, and stimulate effort, and thus come back in blessings on your head. Oh! would that Christian hearts learned to compute more accurately the loss of holy power caused by the deficiency of outward comfort; and realised it more thoroughly as a fact that the withholding of a minister’s dues in this respect is not only a dishonour done to Christ, and an injustice to His servant; but a mischief to themselves, a subtraction of spiritual benefit, a straitening of the channel in which the river of life flows to their thirsty souls. Do you really expect that a cheerless home can yield you an efficient minister? Under the pressure of discomfort and difficulties, do you really believe that his mental powers will play freely—for your instruction; or his spiritual culture proceed unhindered—for your imitation; or his buoyant spirit maintain its energy—for the prosecution of his pastoral work among you? Then you are both unkind and foolish. You seek figs from thistles. You would gather where you have not strawed. If you truly desire the efficient agency of your minister, then give him a comfortable home; give him a comfortable maintenance; let the outflowings of your grateful kindness, whether in word or deed, refresh his spirit. Your reward shall be sure

and speedy. Sowing bountifully, ye shall reap also bountifully.

3. *Freedom from corroding anxiety.*—We refer here mainly to the support, comfort, and education of a family. Anxiety on these points has a depressing effect on the mind. This is beyond question. It is equally certain that the depression is doubly injurious to one engaged in quiet pursuits, in which *thought* is mainly exercised. While the bustle of business and the labour of the hands call the attention from within to fix its solicitous efforts on outward things, the minister's study is a quiet nook for anxiety to nestle in. The mind, too, being his instrument, has its *temper* dulled and its edge blunted by depressing "carefulness." Besides, he is more constantly than most in the midst of home occupations, and under the influence of home circumstances. Now, if the maintenance allotted to him be insufficient, and he be doomed to look daily on loved ones lacking comfort, sinking in health, or at the least drooping in spirit, under a felt inability to provide outward decencies befitting their social station, and necessary to their social influence—who does not see how mighty for evil will be the pain of the saddening sight? Yet it is often experienced. The amount of support given to the greater number of our ministers is very insufficient. Many of them it has sorely crushed. But they have nobly borne themselves under it. So also have their wives. All honour to these "helpers," whose heroic sacrifice of self has done so much. Yes; we could tell of toil verging on drudgery—of unmurmuring privation—of the willing, though tearful surrender of articles that were not only valuable as specimens of art, but dearer far as memorials of mother, sister, and brother. These are facts. We speak what we do know. Comforts, luxuries, gratification of tastes—all have gone—sometimes to supply necessities, often to feed the poor, frequently to help the contribution. All this the minister knows; and it causes him exquisite pain. But

what can he do? Alas! that the pangs of wounded sympathy should sometimes be permitted to prove that they are keener than the dishonour of *debt*. Now, Christian friends! is this a position to put a minister in? Is it? *Can* his mind be healthily buoyant, and his step light, and his Christian joy abundant, so as to overflow into his ministrations, and give them effective energy? It is impossible.

But the case is worse still. His *children need education*. Now, omitting the question how his *daughters* are to get this, in a way at all befitting them, or him, or their social position, let us look at the matter in connexion with *his sons*. It has been wisely said that *every man should be so remunerated as to enable him to educate his son for the occupation which he follows himself*. Social justice seems to demand this. Common equity generally yields it. But *ministers* are an exception. Is this doubted? Look and see. Assign to each £120 or £140. Watch the disbursement. See him paying taxes—supplying home wants—meeting public claims—shewing an example of liberal giving to the poor, and to the great enterprises of Christian benevolence—besides supplying his library with necessary books, and defraying heavy expenses incidental to his sacred office. What sum remains to invest in the education of even one boy for the ministry? Ah! the question is a mockery. Remember, the training for this great work extends over seven or eight years. Public feeling, in this part of the country at least, demands it. The preference for “college-bred” men is proverbial. Very good. But surely it is not generous, it is not just, to insist on qualifications, without supplying the means of acquiring them. If we demand a thoroughly educated ministry—which must always, as society is now constituted, be an *expensive* one—are we not bound, in common fairness, to render a support adequate to its supply? If it is withheld, does not the minister do well to be sorely grieved? Can he help it? Every parent will sympathise

with his feeling. Neither Scripture nor conscience condemns it. Most reasonably may his feelings be wounded when the noblest aspiration of his heart, as it pants after the promotion of the glorious gospel, and yearns to devote its best-beloved to the sacred service, is thus cruelly quenched.

Need we wonder that such pains and anxieties regarding the present comfort and future welfare of his family, should hang heavy on a minister's heart? If the *husband*, the *parent*, the *Christian*, be galled by their pressure, will the *minister* remain unaffected? Impossible. As is the *man*, so will be the *minister*. Free him from these crushing anxieties, and you will make *faith* firmer; you will unfetter *love*; you will unburden *joy*; you will fill his grateful heart with freshened power, and give new life and energy to his labour of love.

4. *Leisure and means for pursuing the cultivation of his mind, and the acquisition of needful knowledge.*

The former is commonly secured to ministers in our country. Public opinion insists on their exclusive devotion to the sacred functions of their office. Herein it is right. God's rule is, "Give thyself *wholly* to them." But this *duty* of entire surrender of time and faculties brings with it a corresponding *right* to competent support. Consistency requires that they who insist on the one should yield the other.

The question of *means* for pursuing this mental culture and acquirements is of more pressing importance. Let us look into it.

The Inspired Book must be a minister's principal study. Nothing but "meditation on it day and night" will keep "his leaf" from "withering," and teach him the mind of the Spirit, and bring into his heart, as forces to move the machinery of his ministerial life, impressions of the solemn grandeur of eternity, the unutterable guilt and folly, danger and wants, of an immortal rebel against God, and the attractive glories of redeeming mercy. Nothing but this will give him

such a mastery over its varied contents as shall make him “mighty in the Scriptures,” for the benefit of his people.

But it is not an enlightened regard to the efficiency of the Christian ministry that would restrict it to this. In an age like the present, of advancing science and widely-diffused intelligence, it would be suicidal for the sacred office to be found lagging in the rear. It would lose respect, and, therefore, influence. It would be unable to sympathise with the feelings, to comprehend and to meet the arguments, or to solve the doubts, of highly cultivated minds. A minister, to be fully equipped for his work in these last days, must be able at least to *stand near* those great discoverers who are ever pressing out the limits of the circle of knowledge upon the surrounding darkness, and who, with all their candour, are ever lighting on new and startling problems—sometimes on staggering facts—which seem to conflict with the clear revelation of eternal truth. He may not be able to *discover*, but looking where these explorers point, he may be able to *explain, reconcile, or vindicate*. Guardian of the sacred region, which science may not touch, how can his protectorate be intelligent and effective unless he know something of the processes and general facts of science? He cannot be a “defender of the faith,” unless he knows something of the weapons of assailants, and be able, if not to throw them back, at least to turn them aside. To scowl an ignorant defiance against them will as little protect the interests of truth as the fierce lions we sometimes find grinning on stone from the top of an entrance gate will scare a robber from the rich mansion within.

So much for the *defensive* use of knowledge. Besides this, it serves also a most important purpose, in *whetting* the mind, and enlarging as well as quickening its powers for other and higher services.

And, last of all, every new disclosure of the nature, relationships, powers, and movements of the material objects around

us, is a new demonstration of the unlimited power and manifold wisdom of God, and may thus be serviceable, not only in helping us to loftier conceptions and lowlier adoration of the blessed and only Potentate, but in crowning with new glory the head of Him "to whom all things are committed;" and in illustrating to the heart of His followers the might, and the majesty, and the exhaustless resources of that royalty to which our Redeemer has been raised from the toils of His earthly sojourn.

But there are other departments of knowledge even more directly necessary and profitable to a Christian minister, because shedding light on that heavenly Book whose contents it is his main duty to explain, illustrate, and enforce. There is a vast store of learned and useful writing connected with the elucidation of the true meaning of Scripture from the original languages; and with these treasures of *Scripture exegesis* a minister must have some acquaintance. The *history* of the Christian Church, and the *doctrinal discussions*, helpful in settling and clearly defining our views of truth, which have filled so large a portion of it, must be in some measure familiar to his mind.

The ancient *customs and manners* of the Jews, and of surrounding nations, must be carefully studied—under the head of biblical antiquities.

The *researches of modern travellers* ought to be, at least in their substance, before the mind, as casting a wonderful light on Scripture narratives.

Besides all this, a minister must have some acquaintance with *general literature*; for how otherwise can he learn the world's tone and temper, and be able to adjust his teaching and his warnings so as properly to meet its wants and counteract its evils; ay, and share, too, in the quickening breath which is moving the modern mind?

But enough of this general statement. Take one specific

example of the benefit of enlarged information. Very recently, *buried cities* have begun to take their place among conspicuous witnesses for God. Nineveh and Babylon have uttered awfully from their opened graves the holy truthfulness of God; and painted brick and sculptured slab have triumphantly proved the accuracy, and shed new light upon the meaning of the sacred oracles. Who does not see that the minister, whose means are not too scanty to put this knowledge in his power, has a mighty advantage for explaining, illustrating, and vindicating the statements of the Divine Word?

Is it not clear, then, from all this, that thorough equipment for the work of the ministry in our day implies large information and much study? For this, *books* are necessary. Books cost *money*. Every minister should be put in possession of the means of procuring them. We know that there is danger both of a *plethora* and a *parade* of learning. But these are abuses. Solid and skilfully-used acquirement, hallowed by a heavenly aim, is a powerful handmaid of truth, and helper of ministerial usefulness. *God's book* stands yet, and will stand till the mystery of time is finished, *without a rival*, as the great treasury of saving truth. But side-lights are kindling all around. The God of providence is presiding at this great illumination. Modern discoveries are His gift. He designs them to be used for His glory. We neglect them at our peril. Ministers who "know the times" will study to use them well. "Men of understanding" among their hearers will gladly furnish the means of doing it.

NOTE.—Another characteristic of the support due to a Christian minister, though not lying altogether within the limits of this chapter, is yet of great importance. *That support must be such as will not operate as a preventive check on Christian devotedness.* If it be so inadequate as to yield

neither comfort nor efficient energy, then it may become a *lawful* question to a pious youth, whether he might not reach a maximum of good-doing, and thus serve the Saviour better in another walk of life. And although *his* young heart, in the flush of its first affections, may scorn all such hinderances as sordid and unworthy, yet who shall guarantee the acquiescence of the *parents*? It is vain to talk of "apostolic fervour," and point to "apostolic self-sacrifice," as if a man could not be a *Christian*, and therefore should not be a *minister*, unless he were prepared also to be a *martyr*. The amount and temperature of Christian feeling actually existing must be dealt with *as it is*. And it is beyond doubt that both the quantity and the quality of ministerial supply from among the youth of our churches, will depend much on the amount of provision made for securing to them an honourable and comfortable independence. If it is insufficient, pious devotedness will be discouraged, and the weight of social standing will go over to other professions.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRIVILEGE, IN ITS HONOUR—DIGNITY OF ASSOCIATES—
IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK.

WE have dwelt at much greater length on the *duty* than it will be possible to do on the *privilege*. Not that we regard the latter as of inferior importance, but (1.) because it has been aimed at all along to present the duty as invested with the attractiveness of a privilege, and as bringing with its right discharge large and varied blessings ; and (2.) because it naturally calls for greater effort to enlighten the understanding, and to direct and stimulate the conscience, than, *after this*, to move and quicken the feelings. He who knows his duty, and does it, will need no *argument* to prove that it is a privilege ; but he may stand seriously in need of having this high privilege held up before him, magnified to his eye, and pressed upon his heart. There cannot be a doubt that the Christian community is, at this moment, precisely in such a position. There is in the heart of our contributors too little of the *sap* of happy and grateful feeling. It is right, it is incumbent, to feel that there is a commanding *authority* on one side, and *should be* unquestioning *submission* on the other. Happy were it for the body of Christ, in all its members, if this submission were deeper and broader, more reverential and more practical. But were this *all*, it would be comparatively a dry, cold, and fruitless relationship between the King of Zion and the givers of His tribute money. Blessed be His name, He has made this duty more than an abstract and narrow question of *right*. It

is a highway for the traffic of heavenly influences—a broad path of enjoyment, skirted with flowers, and overhung with clusters of grapes. He who discharges the duty best will enjoy the blessings most. And if we would but learn to look on every contribution as an honour, and feel it as a boon, to ourselves, it would make the heart lighter, and the hand more open.

This word "*privilege*," has it not two sides, representing "two manner of" ideas? If analysed, would it not yield these components—*honour* and *advantage*? Assuming the accuracy of this analysis, let us look briefly at the two points in their order.

I. It is an *honour* to be a contributor for the support of gospel ordinances. Why is it so? Because of *the dignity of our associates*, and *the importance of the work*.

The dignity of our associates.—To be linked with the great is felt as an honour. The distinction belonging to them descends to envelop all about them. To be the servant of a king is a more coveted honour than to be the master of many others. To be joined in some common enterprise with one of rank, reputation, or intellectual and moral eminence, is reckoned a matter of just pride. Who is there that would not regard it as a gratification and a distinction to act on a committee with a nobleman, and feel his visit to a hovel dignified by the presence of a coronet, and proudly give his time, his arguments, and his money for the promotion of a cause in which *royalty* was embarked?

The feeling is natural and universal. It should operate *Godward*, with a strong and sacred intensity immeasurably greater.

In contributing to the maintenance of gospel ordinances, we are associated with God. The great remedial scheme *originated* in the *Father's* love and wisdom, and advanced to completion under the eye of His watchful providence. The *Son*, in His

fleshly nature, lived and died, and thus became the Saviour of the world, and the great theme of ministerial study and teaching. The ministerial office and endowments are both His gift. "He holdeth the stars in His right hand." He allots their stations, supplies their strength, sovereignly bestows their success. The *Almighty Spirit* brings Him and His glorious work into vital contact with the soul—originating and perfecting all the effective impulses that make the depraved creature "new in Christ Jesus." And *ministers are His agents*. He makes the stream of life pour along the channel of gospel facts *presented by them*. And all the high equipments they possess—their holy aim, their heavenly love, their self-forgetting zeal—their faith, which trusts, and prays, and works, and brings down the might of omnipotence into their human words—all come from His quickening breath. So that in the great work on which ministers are engaged the glorious Godhead is embarked. Christian men! I ask you to look at this. It is true; yes, it is true, that the "eternal God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth," has come very near us. The very God who made *your* wondrous frame, and endowed you with mysterious *mind*; who made man's dwelling beautiful with grass and flowers, with stream, and wood, and mountain; whose hand sprinkled that awful void around us with its shining worlds; and to whom the wide creation is but a harvest field, from which He gathers glory; *He* opened His bosom, and the Son of His love came forth, to dwell among us. Amazing grace! It well may make the wondering heart leap for joy. And ministers are his "*ambassadors*." Oh! is it not an honour to be permitted to support them? It is to stand beside the King of kings. It is to be "a fellow-worker with God." Who would not exultingly hail it as a distinction and a glory!

Nor must it be forgotten that the Lord *had no need of us*, or of THE MINISTERS whom we support. He whose realm is

peopled with strong and pure intelligences, to whom obedience is rapture, and *benevolent* activity double blessedness, could not have wanted heralds to proclaim His mercy. But in gracious wisdom, He passed by "principalities and powers," and gave His high commission to saints of fleshly mould. Nor is this all. He was as independent of the *people* as of the minister. He could have given His servants a miraculous sustentation, binding both land and sea to supply them, making manna drop upon their path, or filling the raven's mouth with their daily bread. But He has not done so. Wiser, tenderer far is His care for us. He has ordained that every member of the Church shall have the right of helping in the holy work. Blessed obligation which binds to such a privilege! "And this honour have *all* the saints." It is God's free gift to all. It is their chartered heritage. Oh! sell not this precious birthright. Let it not lie unused. It is your crown and glory. Angels well may covet the distinction. Yes! and, behind the scenes, they *enjoy* it. We trace their dim figures mingling with early patriarchs. They carried messages to holy prophets. They heralded the Saviour's birth, ministered to Him in life, watched in His empty grave, consoled His sorrowing disciples, delivered His imprisoned servant. And even now, in the world's far-spent day, their sacred work is going on. "They are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." What an honour to be in company like this! Christian brother! if, in the right spirit, you give but "a widow's mite," you become an angel's fellow.

But again: it is an honour to contribute for the support of the Christian ministry, because it is *helping in a work of infinite importance*.

What is a minister's work? Listen to his words. He speaks of things strange, awful, and glorious. He tells that this great world of men has fallen from the fellowship of the holy, and is lying now under the hoof of a spiritual tyranny, whose powers

are wielded by fallen angels, strong and subtle, desperate convicts, banished from heaven, and now warring with it. He tells, too, of a mighty champion of fallen men, who, when the ripe world was ready, entered it *a man*, breathing our very air, living our very life, mingling with common men, yet uttering heavenly counsels, and from His human lips dropping omnipotent words upon the seething deep, and it calmed—upon disease, and it fled—upon the demoniac, and he smiled in peace—upon the silent grave, and its pale slumberer woke. He tells, further, how this lordly power was hidden, and the Almighty One let himself down to shame and mortal agony, only to rise in power, and ascend to the glories of a heavenly throne. This holy life and this awful death are the means of salvation. They have already given glory and blessedness to ransomed millions. Millions more await His saving touch. The glorious gospel must be brought to them. It is the minister's task to tell of this redemption, and by warning, welcoming, instructing, to carry forward the designs of sovereign mercy toward these destined millions. Momentous work! Glorious and blessed as the heaven which it peoples with the hosts of "the just made perfect." What an honour to join in it! What a prize for ambition! Who would not exult in the thought of sharing in it? *We shall share in it, if we contribute to the support of him whom the Redeemer employs to perform it.*

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIVILEGE, IN ITS ADVANTAGES—GRATIFICATION OF
CHRISTIAN FEELINGS.

THIS is only a special exemplification of a general rule. *All* duties well discharged return in blessings. So is it in *nature*: water rises in vapour, and falls in rain; the land drinks from the sea, and pays it back in riverfuls. So is it in *providence*: the deeds of benevolence distil in blessings on the heart and lot of the good-doer. God's works are full of these circles.

But let us see *what* advantages are bestowed in the case before us.

1. *Temporal blessings*.—In the case of Israel the connexion between the liberal support of ordinances and the inflowing of temporal prosperity was close, constant, and conspicuous. It was a principle in the *constitution*: "The Levite," &c., "shall eat and be satisfied, that the Lord thy God may bless thee," &c. In their *history* it was ever receiving fresh illustrations: "Mine house lieth waste, therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from his fruit" (Hag. i. 9, 10). But when the temple begins to rise from its ruins, "From this day will I bless you." And almost the last words that fell from prophetic lips were these—"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive



it." Most pregnant words! and true in many ways. They are sounding yet in the ear of all the churches. When the tithes are withheld, and the ministry sinks in power, public morality, deprived of its best defender, will yield to the assaults of worldly, infidel, and anti-social influences. And when the public conscience is debauched, who shall be blind or bold enough to believe in the permanence of that *regard for law* which gives to a government its stability, and to a community its order, safety, and peace? The *efficient maintenance of Christian ordinances—a cultivated conscience—healthy social feelings—order, peace, and prosperity*—these "hath God joined together," and no man can put them asunder.

But what we must look at mainly here is the experience of individual Christians, and the effect of contributing on their temporal comforts. Most confidently may this appeal be made. Many grateful hearts can testify that liberal givings have brought a blessing on their basket and their store. Sowing bountifully, they have reaped bountifully even in "carnal" things. Not only did they reap a richer joy from the portion they retained, but it grew upon their hands in a way before unknown, and thus, in their happy surprise, prepared for them a new enjoyment. And is it not reasonable to suppose that He whose hand is on the springs of nature, and on all the powers of providence, should *know how* to make all blessings fructify beneath His smile? And shall not He be *willing* to do it who twice made little handfuls grow mysteriously into food for thousands? "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Christian men! pour out ungrudgingly the oil that sustains the prophets of the Lord; there will be a blessing in the cruse. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty."

2. *Gratification* of Christian love and gratitude.

He who feels love desires to express it. Instinctively the heart yearns to unfold it. It is felt as a high privilege and

pleasure ; and he who will suggest or provide a channel of outlet and manifestation is regarded as conferring a favour.

So is it in regard to the feeling of *gratitude*. Suppose an unknown benefactor did you some signal service which filled your heart and home with happiness. You would wonder at the retiring modesty that blessed your lot but hid itself from your affection, and you would be ever on the alert to discover the kind incognito, and you would carefully scan the face of every friend, and put many a dexterous question to draw forth the cherished secret. Nay more, would not your ignorance give *pain* as well as perplexity ? It would. And he would be reckoned a *new* benefactor who should reveal the old one, and thus relieve the irksome fulness of your heart by letting out its gratitude.

Christians ! you love sincerely Him who is “altogether lovely ;” and you are bent down with the felt weight of obligations boundless as the value of the offering that bought you, and the brimful happiness of the heaven to which you are journeying. And as you walk about on a world that has drunk atoning blood, and think of the sweet forgiveness you enjoy, and the happy penitence that bedews your spirit, and feel the gentle breathings of the Holy One within, and hear the blissful echoes that sometimes break in upon you through the parted cloud which hides the harpers on the sea of glass—oh, are you not *pained* to give vent to your labouring gratitude ? But how shall it be done ? Gracious Lord ! he has earned a new title to this gratitude by providing a way of expressing it. Go, minister to the needs of His servants. They are His representatives. They are His instruments. His glory is the grand result of all their services. He will accept your offerings as rendered to himself. Happy people ! who can reach so readily the Master’s heart, and pour, even yet, the box of ointment on His head.

3. *Fostering* of the feelings from which contributions flow.

Faith.—You give a subscription. It is the fruit and evidence of your belief in certain things. It *confirms* your belief in them. It is a “sensible sign” of them, brings them anew into full, deliberate view, and claims for them again the seal of your calm, practical acknowledgment of *their reality*. In fact, it compels you to do as did that sagacious general who landed once on our unconquerable shores—“burn your ships”—throwing new difficulties in the way of retreat, and securing consistent steadfastness. Nay more, like that other warrior, who threw forward the royal heart among the ranks of enemies that he might be nerved with more desperate courage, these contributions which you have made, and are now making, give you a stake in gospel enterprises, forming a *mighty interest in advance* which attracts you ever onward. Yes! contributions are a *means of grace*. They react mightily on the *conviction* which produced them—giving it sharper outline and firmer texture. And when at any time the treacherous heart is ready to let slip the things unseen and spiritual, our givings bring them back. Precious chains! of earthly mould, yet binding us to the great eternity, and forming sacred avenues along which fresh impulses may travel from the glorious verities of the gospel.

Grateful affection.—We have seen that givings for the support of Christian ordinances form an *outlet* for the Christian feelings of love and gratitude. But they are also *means of growth*. Love is *produced* by looking on attractive qualities of person or of character. It is *strengthened* by the same process. It thrives by exercise; and the way to exercise it is to present its object. Especially is this the case when gratitude for benefits is added to affectionate esteem for character.

In no other way can the love of Jesus be kindled and kept glowing. It obeys ordinary laws. To have an ever fresh and dominant affection for our holy Benefactor, we must stand often near Him, to gaze in mute wonder on the glories of His

perfect character, and the matchless achievements of His love. The eye affects the heart. The well-springs of love gush forth at the touch of faith. And inasmuch as regular contribution for the support of the ministers of Christ is a powerful means of quickening and invigorating *faith*, in the same measure it is a means of stimulating *love*. Recalling and enforcing those forgotten facts which form the most marvellous display of heavenly love that the universe ever witnessed, or has materials to furnish, it brings close to the heart the mightiest instrumentality for kindling and feeding its love. Who has not felt that a little money laid out in helping to rear a monument to some cherished friend bears high interest in making his memory dearer still? And if the money were expended for some object on which his heart was set, and guided the warm thoughts back to rich and varied gifts with which his liberal kindness had lighted up our heart and home, would not that little payment be a mighty stimulant of grateful affection? Assuredly it would. And every instalment that we paid would be like *bringing in his picture*—reviving and prolonging in our heart the image which his love had left imprinted there.

So is it in the case of that tenderest, wisest, kindest Friend of all. Our givings bring Him into view, fix our thoughts upon His glorious person, and lead to grateful and refreshing views of that depth of pity and that wondrous grasp and compass of love, that could reach its objects in spite of so much sin and through such floods of suffering. By the very contrast between the little that we give, and the boundless grace to which it is a tribute, the heart feels more deeply, and learns more accurately to estimate, that love “which passeth knowledge.”

Oh! who would grudge a box of perfume to such a Friend as this? Nay rather, what Christian heart will not receive as a blessing, and cherish as a privilege, the opportunity of pour-

ing it upon His head? Mary loved the most because she had been *forgiven* most; nor can we fail to see that she loved the more because she had *given* much.

Desire of advancing the Divine glory.—This is a fundamental feeling in every Christian bosom. It is one grand peculiarity and distinction of the “new creature.” Any means of increasing it in amount and power will be gladly welcomed, and used as a privilege. Whatever illustrates that glory, and holds it forth impressively, is *feeding the main stream* of spiritual life. Now it is, no doubt, true that *all creation* is a mirror of His greatness. Wonders of almighty wisdom lie hid in every leaf. That pale primrose on the window-sill; the rounded hills on which the eye rests beyond; these spreading trees that clothe them; that powerful radiance which lights up flower, and hill, and tree; and these twinkling worlds that wait to light our sphere when it is gone—all, all speak loudly of His glory. But mostly in the *work of grace*, by which rebels are restored, and the wretched raised to happiness, and the depraved made new in Christ Jesus, is His boundless glory shewn. Now, this is precisely the minister’s theme. And when I give my money to support him, am I not providing an instrumentality for holding forth this glory, and, in the very act, fixing my attention on it, and bringing my heart again within the range of its heavenly power? Nay more, the *minister is the Saviour’s servant*, maintaining His sovereign rights, proclaiming His saving mercy, and every sum given to him *is a tribute to his Lord*. In the payment of this tribute I bend my neck again to His gracious yoke, and add to my loyal obedience the settled force of habit. Most precious privilege! It helps the wrestling saint against his own pride, deals a new blow on the head of his guilty independence; and thus laying him at the feet of Jesus, where only peace is found, hastens forward that grand process of humiliation which leads him in at last among the throng of worshippers who cast their

crowns before the throne. Blessed people! whom their Lord thus trains for heaven! Most gracious Saviour, to whom "the silver and the gold" belong of right, but who has made the rendering of them a means of heavenly grace, and thus transfigured duty into a priceless blessing.

Breathings after holiness.—What Christian does not daily feel deep longings to be "holy as God is holy"? The instinct of the new-born nature craves after it. But it is met by counter-cravings. The crucified flesh struggles fiercely still. It is a terrible war that ends not but with life. Never shall the tainted nature *be pure* till, like the leprous house, it *be taken down*. But duty binds to this. The heart yearns after it. For this high end heaven and earth were moved. The incarnation, and the life, death, and glory that followed, were the mighty means of vindicating, exhibiting, and procuring holiness. Gospel ordinances are an apparatus for producing and promoting it. The Christian ministry is a gift for the special purpose of "perfecting the saints." Now, in contributing to the support of the ministry, we are not only maintaining a machinery of sanctifying power which may, and we trust shall, effect its momentous purpose in us, but, *in the very act*, we are *swaying over to the side of holiness*, and helping the infirm will to a more determined bias in that direction. Is it not a fact of familiar experience that men are interested in, inclined towards, bound up with, any cause for which they have given subscriptions? When the *hand* of Scotland opens to rear a memorial to some great champion of her freedom, does not her patriotic *heart* glow with new fervour, and cling with freshened fondness to those sacred principles in whose defence he joyfully enlisted the energies of his brawny arm, and lion heart, and incorruptible integrity? Yes, and most naturally; for the public eye is turned again to peruse the record of his noble deeds, and every patriot, by contributing to his honour, is not only bound *in consistency*, but inclined *in feeling*, to

maintain the chartered liberties for which he toiled, and fought, and died.

Even so the grand spiritual end of the gospel ministry will be realised more palpably, and set before the mind more forcibly, by the habit of contributing. The very act of withdrawing a portion of our means from other objects, and devoting it to this, will foster, though it never could beget, a *propension of mind and heart* towards it. Just as the *patriotic* feeling, if true and hearty, finds fuel in every payment, so the *Christian* feeling, which craves after greater holiness, if true and hearty, will thrive on every disbursement for the maintenance of those ordinances whose grand object is “the perfecting of the saints.” Christian men, is not this true? Do not your contributions make you gravitate to holiness, and bind you more firmly in its interest? Have you not found them separating you, in your deepest sympathies, from the perishing trifles of earth—certifying to your consciousness afresh that your weightiest duties and truest interests are in a world unseen—stamping you, not only to the outward eye, but in your own approving heart, as members of that “holy nation” whose King is the holy Saviour, whose coveted rest is the “holy heaven,” and who reckon money as doing its noblest work when it honours that Saviour, and prepares for that place of purity.

Is it so? And have you blessed God for the privilege of being permitted to contribute? Most wisely has He thrown the maintenance of the outward machinery of His gospel on the religious sympathies of those whom it has saved and sanctified—just that these holy feelings might be called forth into more vigorous play and more sacred authority. He has given them an interest in it. He has identified them with it. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and grace of our God! Oh, the honour, benefit, and blessedness of being associated with Him in such a work! Who would not joyfully

support those ordinances through which the Mighty Spirit breathes life into the dead, and new vigour into the living, and a sweet scent of heaven into the heart of ripening godliness; nay, more, which are so like their gracious Giver in affluence of power, that "virtue goes out of" them to refresh and quicken every heart whose love has given its "mite" to sustain them?

But our pleadings must now close. Whether they have been effective or not, rests with others to determine. This, at least, can be said—that they have *in themselves* the majestic authority of God, the solemnity of eternity, the weight of infinite and unending interests.

Christians of Great Britain! suffer one parting word. Ye dwell in "a land which drinketh water of the rain of heaven." It is the home of peace, the bulwark and asylum of freedom, the anchor of the world's stability, and the light of the world's onward way. What has made it so? Christian ordinances, radiating the pure and healing light of the gospel. And these same ordinances are the hope of the future, as they have been the strength and sunshine of the past. At this moment loud voices urge you to give them efficient maintenance. The world's pace is marvellously quickened. A spirit of impatient onwardness has breathed on everything. In hasty growth there is great danger. The means of guidance and counteraction must be all the more vigorously applied. Amid the eager rush of scientific adventurers, digging for truth among sepulchral rocks, or bringing it home from far-off worlds, but sometimes heaping their gifts on the altar of an unknown god, the saving truths of that blessed book, which is abreast of every age, must be boldly proclaimed by an earnest and accomplished ministry. When the tide of rampant infidelity, mingling with a mysterious back-current of superstition, is beating against the barriers of our faith, and grievous immoralities disfigure our practice, and a dead sea of callous

indifferentism, which has sunk down from the sphere of holy aspirations, and seeks no heaven but the gratification of its physical appetites, is growing with portentous rapidity round our cultivated fields; and "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches" are pressing in upon the heart, and engrossing the energies of eager multitudes—with what power shall we hopefully confront these banded influences of the world? How shall we infuse into society a healing life, and a hallowed aim, and a reverent spirit? How shall we make its quickening energies, and growing knowledge, and manifold conveniences, and multiplied means of power, the instruments of God? Christians of this great empire! with you rests the power to do it. Pour into the treasury of the Lord your willing offerings; follow them with your prayers; second them with your labours. Pour on till the treasury overflow. The streams will go to water the wastes elsewhere. Never shall that Lord who sits over against it say, "it is enough," till the "gains of the whole earth be consecrated to the Lord," and the great Jericho of this world's ungodliness be compassed by the armies, and fall by the breath, of the living God.

THE END.

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